

RECLAIMING THE BLACK CHURCH'S PROPHETIC VOICE FOR SOCIAL
JUSTICE THROUGH THE SOCIAL CRITIQUE OF THE
EIGHTH-CENTURY HEBREW PROPHETS

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ABSTRACT

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The focus of this project was to introduce a model that influenced First Baptist Church of Manassas' ideological orientation and external engagement in or with social justice concerns in the community. Participants engaged in a Christian Kerygma Sunday series of both preaching and Sunday school which asserted supportive biblical ideology. Subsequently, they provided feedback through questionnaires, surveys, and interviews. The project data revealed an increase in awareness of biblical ideology toward social justice engagement. The findings demonstrate that church leadership which engages in prophetic preaching and teaching supportive of social justice engagement can increase congregational participation in community social concerns.

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Much of what is fruitful in this work would not have come to life without the help of countless persons. First, I thank the Lord God for vision and grace to complete what was set before me to glorify the Lord and edify the children of God. I thank my professional mentors, Drs. Kenneth Cummings and Robert Walker, not only for supervising my journey but also for providing me with exemplary models of academic excellence and personal friendship. Thank you to my UTS Prophetic Preaching and Praxis peer group for the ongoing blessing of collaboration and friendship. I have learned much from each of you.

Thank you to those who put in much time and effort to read and offer invaluable feedback and direction on my writings and project: Drs. Ritchie Carroll, Jeffrey Carter, James Johnson, Sandra Mitchell, James Victor, and Darrell White. Their contributions have improved this project; mistakes and misjudgments remain my own. Thank you to those friends and context associates who offered assistance and listening ears throughout the journey: Patricia Benson, Esther McCloud, Frank McMillan, Thomasine Parsons, Carol Patterson, Jimmy Sanders, and Gerald Stewart. I am indebted to my project participants for their invaluable responses to questionnaires, surveys, and interviews. Thank you to my entire First Baptist Church family for the immeasurable support and encouragement every single week. The Lord God could not have yoked me, in love, with a better church family. Special thanks to my Administrative Assistant Stephanie Brown

for putting up with my many requests and helping my life as Senior Servant to continue without too many headaches.

Aside from the Lord God Almighty (the full Godhead), the most important thank you goes to the most important people in my life on this earth, my extraordinary and beautiful wife, Bonita Savage, and our incredible children, Keith Savage II and Kayla Savage, for their daily love, support, patience, and encouragement. This journey would not be successful without the three of you. You sustain me every single day of my life with your love and joy. Thank you.

Yours in Christ,

Keith A. Savage

PREFACE

Do what is good and run from evil—that you may live! Then the Lord God Almighty will truly be your helper, just as you have claimed he is. Hate evil and love what is good; remodel your courts into true halls of justice. Perhaps even yet the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on his people who remain.

Amos 5:14-25 New Living Translation

Each disciple of Christ is a living organism made up of the totality of one's life experiences and commitment to Christian mission and ministry. Yet, each Christian's life journey influences and relates to one another. When Christians bond as a congregation, the amalgamation of their life experiences and commitment to mission and ministry together affect the kingdom of God. It is a kingdom focused on the Lord's ruling authority in shaping the human experience.

Part of God's role in establishing the Church as a power to shape the human experience is that of community engagement in matters of poverty and justice. However, many churches in the United States are in a crisis concerning community engagement. Some have rejected addressing the issues of poverty and justice as a part of the Christian basics of faith.

The prophet Amos, in Amos Chapter 5, holds out the option of life to an Israelite community needing resuscitation. It is life seeking an ethical-moral life guided by God's will for the moral dimension of human relations. The prophet desires for the people's claim of the God as helper to be true. However, the claim has validity only when the

people perform the ethical dimensions of God's righteousness and reject evil. It is an individual and faith community demand.

This same danger is present for the church at Sardis in the book of Revelation, Chapter Three. God informs the Sardis church leadership of its measured moments of failure and injustice. The church is in danger of remaining asleep to the Lord's deeds. In essence, the Sardis church is dead in service to Christ. Those in the church who are in the habit of ignoring God's justice and righteousness must rectify their actions, by repenting for their disunion, and perform the deeds of God's love. It is not the starting point of existence by which the church receives judgment, but the turning points of its journey. Somewhere along the journey, a majority of the congregation fell asleep to the praxis of God's social justice in the local context. God warns the church to "wake up" and reverse the complacency; otherwise, death of Kingdom purpose will follow.

The issues of poverty and justice are forces continuing to affect the communities in which churches exist today in America. Yet, so are the forces of lethargy and sleeping sickness among some congregants and leadership concerning social justice as basic concerns of the local church. There is a need to encourage local church leadership to reengage the local church body to be a living church in their respective community. A church empowered and sustained by the living Lord. The goal is not to render a damning judgment upon the local church, but awaken it to its God-gifted power to engage and potentially bring remedy within the community it serves regarding matters of poverty and biblical social justice (social justice being the merits of a righteous relationship to the Lord and to others).

Each congregation born into earthly existence develops its own spiritual journey that advances or impedes the kingdom of God. As learned with the church at Sardis, a measurement of a Christian church is not according to its founding moment, but the turning points that move it forward in Christian mission, ministry, and community engagement. Ministry is a matter of individual and corporate obedience. The call to develop and lead a people into corporate mission is a matter of divine calling. For example, Moses did not choose to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt; the Lord made the choice for Moses. Yet with the choice came a spiritual empowerment of a corporate people and leadership beyond human capacity. The Apostle Paul reminds the church in Rome of this truth, when he stated in Romans 14:7 New International Version,¹ “For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone.”

Many personalities and turning points along the journey develop a pastor’s bent toward social justice in the congregational setting and for those excluded from a real pursuit of economic, educational, and communal achievement. The author became the Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church of Manassas (hereinafter referred to as First Baptist Church) in August 2002. Current demographic realities in the area surrounding the church show a burgeoning, and somewhat hidden, population of persons lacking access to adequate and affordable living and social resources (housing, transportation, utilities, food, and basic medical and dental services). Where can the individual Christian and local church body turn to for answers these social dilemmas?

¹ All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New International Version, NIV.

Scripture stands as an affirmation of the greatest power on earth, a power of God, given to people of faith. It is a power that enables the Church to become a radiant, dynamic, world-changing people that usher in God's social justice. Such a ministry has never felt more important and more needed than now. Believing in social justice, as a biblical ideology, is an underserved commodity within the local church; it is a pressing desire to see a paradigm shift of practice toward social justice concerns within the Prince William County/Manassas community. Although those actively engaged do so wholeheartedly, the numbers are deficient in relation to both the growing congregation and the needs within the surrounding community.

Those who grew up in the segregated 1960s and 1970s garnered unsolicited exposure to the American ideals of social injustice (ethnic, economic, and educational). The mixture of family and communal expectations and the intentional racial blockades of societal bigotry combined to produce a fertile ground for a personal passion for social justice. It became easy to learn to reject injustice as normative and acceptable through a lifetime of observational and instructional mentoring opportunities. These experiences ground one's prophetic teaching and preaching to those seeking to know God—through wisdom and application and not just to know about God. These experiences are great awakenings to address the social injustices that run against the moral principles of God's mandate to love neighbor as self. It starts with leadership.

The criticism of lethargy falls heavily upon church leadership. The congregational vision, in which lies the practical and delicate balance of evangelism, social justice and community care, must hear the voices of the poor and powerless regarding their plight

and the need of God's children to speak truth to power. Yet, it takes an entire church body to care for a community. The push to address the matter of injustice directly has involved the press, pulpit, and political forums alike. There must develop or redevelop a component of ministry in the deliberate and practical work of social justice. It is this Christian hermeneutic vision that must become a basic tenet within the foundation of the Judeo-Christian teaching and proclamation. Again, "[f]or none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone" (Romans 14:7).

The distinctive journeys of First Baptist Church and its Senior Pastor draw them together to form an imperfect union in search of a perfect Lord's call to engage in biblical social justice. It is a union to engage the Black Church, in particular, to reengage the voice of the prophets, and to develop supportive programs and actions of social transformation. This is the underpinning of "Reclaiming the Black Church's Prophetic Voice for Social Justice through the Social Critique of the Eighth-century Hebrew Prophets."

DEDICATION

To my wife, co-laborer, and best friend, Bonita Savage, my only Lady; you continue to teach me how to love unconditionally. I have no desire to imagine life on earth without you. I look forward to the continued blessing of sharing the countless joys of the Lord among us. You have never stopped believing in me and I will never stop being grateful. The Lord has favored me with you in my life.

To my son Keith Savage II, my Buddy: You continue to inspire me to be a better man for the Lord, as I see the incredible life the Lord is creating in you. You continue to help me grow and make you proud of me. The Lord has indeed blessed me with a son such as you.

To my daughter Kayla Savage, my Princess: If ever I wanted to know how God loves a parent through children, I only need to think of you and your infectious smile and love for me. You fill my life with joy.

To my mother, Sibley Savage, you gave me my first lesson of unconditional love.

To my father, Theodore Savage, Jr., you gave me my first lesson on valuing knowledge.

To my biological brothers Teddy III, Brett, Steve, Gregg, and Wade, each of you have imparted a piece of your character in my life to sustain and bless me daily.

To my mother-in-law Imogene Flowers (Gi-Gi) and the memory of my father-in-law Artis Flowers (Pop-Pop), thank you for loving me as one of your own.

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I am indebted to so many. Let me simply say thank you.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AME	African Methodist Episcopal
B.C.E.	Before Common Era
CB radio	Citizens Band radio
CEV	Contemporary English Version
D.C.	District of Columbia
Est.	Estimate
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NIV	New International Version
Proj.	Projection
R&B	Rhythm and Blues
U.S.	United States of America
V.O.I.C.E.	Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement

INTRODUCTION

As this project began current levels of participation in social justice programs and organizations by members of First Baptist Church were below acceptable levels. The suspected culprit was a lack of understanding of the biblical ideology regarding social justice, and a lack of intentional prophetic teaching and preaching by the congregation's pastoral leadership and Christian educators. It was important to develop a model of ministry that affectively addressed the function and import of social justice and righteousness for the contemporary Christian church's proclamation and for church-wide engagement. How could the messages of the eighth-century Hebrew prophets and revelation of God through the words and actions of Jesus the Christ affect the attitudes and actions of First Baptist Church? Were there any ways to engage the Black Church to remain actively engaged and supportive of programs and actions of social transformation?

A model of ministry was developed with these concerns in mind, and as the underpinning of "this project. It was intended for this model to alter current attitudes and practices of some in Black church leadership and congregation in order to connect the prophetic call for social justice to a conscious participation as agents of change for social justice in surrounding communities. It entails the intentional usage of a proclamation that is dual tracked through the two main arteries of Christian discipleship—preaching and

teaching. An individual Christian functioning alone may contribute something to the momentary eradication of a single act of injustice. However, achieving systemic transformation toward justice and righteousness in the everyday reality of humanity involves a communal response of both the individual Christian and the entire church congregation. Crucial to this response is the development of a Christian pedagogy that grounds the Christian response in the prophetic, political, and social dimensions of Christian scripture and ministry as practical theology. In particular, the words and actions of the eighth-century Hebrew prophets and of Jesus the Christ offer the contemporary Christian congregation a theology and praxis for social justice. For the purposes of this project, justice is defined as having to do with fairness, impartial treatment, or commitment to what is right in the sight of God. Justice requires that each person envision himself or herself not as a separate participant but as a component of a whole. It involves the deliberate integration of moral and ethical interpretations of God's justice along with practical application of the interpretation.

There is a long tradition of the Black church to link social justice, as an ethic of religious practice and faith, with political and social change. It is an aspect which asserts that God is the God of the politically, socially, and economically oppressed and of the marginalized within society. It is the physical manifestation of biblical salvation and truth among humanity where all experience divine love, freedom, justice, and peace. It is a theology born from scriptural themes of prophetic calls for a return to justice and the life and ministry of Jesus Christ among the marginalized and poor.

The Black church in America, since its early days of existence, empowers itself to continue as a Christian faith community that practices social justice as a communal process to influence Christian values, hearts, and practice for just social transformations within the larger society. It is this Christian hermeneutic, or theory of interpretation, and the vision of our identity in Christ that must re-emerge as the foundation of the Black church's reliance upon Old and New Testament writings; that is the Judeo-Christian proclamation and doctrinal teaching. It is necessary for the contemporary local Black church leadership, both pastors and laity, to re-hear and reclaim the prophetic appeal of the Christian bible and link it to the prophetic call of practical application or praxis.

David Polk, Associate Professor of pastoral ministry at Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, and theologian, maintains that practical theology emerges at the convergence of theological reflection and ecclesial action.² The desired outcome of prophetic proclamation is not simply to forespeak or foresee an apocalyptic future of certainty. Rather it is the awakening of the relationship of pastor and laity (local church) with God (prophetic) as a commissioned mouthpiece and body to communicate and represent God's justice in the world. The prophetic proclamation is to express the "acts and words of God, seen, heard, and interpreted by the prophets...."³

This understanding derives from a critical examination of the ideologies and theologies of social justice in selected writings in the Biblical canon. A review of biblical

² David Polk, "Practical Theology," in *A New Handbook of Christian Theology*, eds. Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 375.

³ Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 33.

scriptures and social justice literature suggests that a Christian pedagogy highlighting the prophetic, political, and social dimensions of ministry integrated within Christian education (proclamation and group study) has the potential to engender a positive response to participation in local church social justice efforts. Opportunities for prophetic witness as a gathered community become lost and de-valued in a one-dimensional view of the local church's call to individual spiritual salvation alone. Prophetic proclamation and Christian education must motivate individuals and congregations to move beyond simply holding spirit-filled worship and evangelism that feeds the soul. It must engender an equally needed spirit-filled work that meets the political, economic, and social needs of justice in the daily lives of those in the community. The Black church must be encouraged to once again embrace its prophetic dimension to stand as a moral agent of God that sees and reacts to injustice as God does. The purpose of the church is not only to be a praying and worshipping community, but also to embrace the call as a "moral community as well whose mission embraces a careful evaluation of the moral life of society."⁴ The classical eighth-century prophets, after allowance for social, contextual, and textual distortion, offer relevant moments of social justice as revitalizing and inspiring resources for contemporary Christian proclamation and praxis within the Black church.

That is why this project! Throughout the years, there has been a growing passion for biblical social justice. Biblical justice and righteousness look beyond the mere letter

⁴ Paul T. Jersild and Dale A. Johnson, "The Church's Response to Social Issues," in *Moral Issues and Christian Response*, 5th ed., eds. Paul T. Jersild and Dale A. Johnson (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1993), 3.

of the law and demand the fulfillment of responsibilities that arise out of the spirit of the law in human relationship founded upon a personal relationship with God. It is the acknowledgement Christian faith provides the nexus that holds biblical ideology and the justice of God together in dynamic action.

The model of ministry presented here entails the development and implementation of a four-part sermon series (proclamation) over the course of six weeks. However, proclamation by itself is insufficient for change. Biblical illiteracy both affects and contributes to the deficiency in passion for social justice. During the same period as the sermon series, the laity leadership presented a synchronized four-part Adult Sunday School curriculum over four consecutive Sundays. Both sermon and curriculum focus on scripture and its interpretation to aid in advancing the biblical foundations for the commitment of First Baptist Church as an informed and active agent for social justice within Prince William County and beyond (praxis). A conjoined prophetic proclamation and teaching praxis of clergy and laity within First Baptist Church was designed to offer a comprehensive witness of the Christian Church.

Authenticity requires attention to the Black church's role of producing practical manifestations of its witness toward social justice. This is possible only if the congregation (clergy and laity) spiritually and practically engages in comprehending the biblical writings and narratives that support the goal of social justice. An intentional learning process uplifts the value of social justice within Black church practical theology. The goal is reestablishment of importance for self-possibilities in Christ. It is a goal that benefits the individual, congregation, and the local and global community.

The words and actions of the eighth-century Hebrew prophets and Jesus the Christ in the Gospel of Luke are the prime scriptural support. The focus lies in the confidence that the social critique of the classical eighth-century Hebrew prophets and the revolutionary politics of Jesus the Christ support the premise that the Word of God makes the case for the place of social justice in the church's ethics, teaching, proclamation, and ministry practices. Social justice activism has historically been a common factor in the life of the Black Church; proclamation and Christian education have commonly served as the vital venues for heartening participation. It is common for clergy and laity leadership to help move the local church beyond the confines of fellowship ministry and into the local community to engage in spiritual and social matters of care and support.

The project, which spans a two-month period of treatment, entails the full aspect of kerygmatic proclamation. Christian education and preaching are the project's main sources of discipleship training. Learning in classrooms and learning during the preaching of the Gospel move the understanding of individuals to become experiences; then one's practical theology becomes a normative ideology of practice. Together classroom curricula and preaching become rich opportunities for engagement in discovering the connection between the biblical scriptures and Christian ideology and the practices of social justice in the local church.

Project participants offered feedback through questionnaires, surveys, and interviews to validate the importance of a prophetic witness in preaching and teaching to raise the internalized value of social justice for the individual Christian and the whole congregation. In so doing, reclamation of the Christian ideology to participate in social

justice ministries and endeavors of First Baptist Church is generated. Ministries and endeavors include the V.O.I.C.E., church social justice programs, or new ministry possibilities. It is possible to revitalize the value of social justice within the Black Church.

This model of ministry adds a small contribution to the field of practical theology and theological education by engaging clergy and laity in proper motivational factors. The model moves the discussion forward in answering questions such as: How do the Adult Sunday School class participants at First Baptist Church understand the meaning of biblical social justice? Can prophetic preaching and teaching of the eighth-century Hebrew prophets and Jesus the Christ disturb and disrupt the conventional wisdom of the church that maintains a public persona of salvific evangelism only? Can the words and actions of the eighth-century Hebrew prophets and Jesus the Christ in the Gospel of Luke demonstrate a direct influence on current membership ideology and praxis?

The project embodies a model of ministry that conceptualizes the theory and practice of social justice in the pedagogical and proclamation practices of First Baptist Church. Such practice supports greater openness to personal participation in social justice advocacy in local context and participation in faith-based community organizing for social transformation. The project is based on a confidence that the social critique of the classical eighth-century Hebrew prophets and the revolutionary politics of Jesus the Christ support the premise that the Word of God makes the case for the place of social justice in the church's ethics, teaching, proclamation, and practices.

Chapter One of this thesis describes the underlying reasoning for the choice of this particular area of ministry by examining one's personal journey and the nexus to the demographic characteristics of the context in which this project is carried out. Chapter Two provides a look at relevant and current literature addressing the area of ministry in support of the present model of specialization. Chapter Three espouses the theoretical foundation for the model of ministry and perspectives that influence and support engagement of social justice concerns in the local church. Chapter Four describes the methodological design of the project used in the field experiment. This chapter also includes the project's hypothesis, treatment regiment, research design, and measurement. Chapter Five provides a narrative of the actual implementation of the project, including data collection, data analysis, and outcomes. Chapter Six includes a summary of the project as well as theological reflections, project summations, and salient insights surrounding the implementation and collection methodology.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Personal Pilgrimage Toward Ministry

Fingerprints are permanent and unique. In fact, in criminal cases involving identical twins, fingerprint analysis has been shown to be more reliable than DNA evidence; identical twins share the same DNA structure, but form different fingerprint patterns in the womb.¹ Science further informs of another everyday mystery of life on this earth: No two snowflakes or snow crystals form exactly the same pattern during a winter season.

The probability that two snow crystals will be exactly alike, in molecular structure and in appearance, is very minute. To prove otherwise would not be easy. Every winter there are about 1 septillion (1, 000, 000, 000, 000, 000, 000, 000 or a trillion trillion) snow crystals that drop from the sky!²

No two water molecules possess the same molecular arrangement or react alike in the same atmospheric conditions; identifying identical snowflakes with the same molecular structure and “history of development is virtually impossible.”³ The late twentieth century has seen the rapid concern for the environment that has sparked a

¹ King County, “The Basics of Fingerprint Science,” (Seattle, WA: King County), accessed March 27, 2010, <http://www.kingcounty.gov/safety/sheriff/enforcement/afis/fingerprinting.aspx>.

² The Library of Congress, “Is it true that no two snow crystals are alike?” *Everyday Mysteries: Fun Science Facts from the Library of Congress*, accessed March 27, 2010, <http://www.loc.gov/rr/scitech/mysteries/snowcrystals.html>.

³ Ibid.

movement to discover one's personal impact upon the earth. There is a movement afoot to determine one's 'carbon footprint' or environmental impact. According to SmartEcoEnergy:

A carbon footprint is a measure of the impact our activities have on the environment, and in particular climate change. It relates to the amount of greenhouse gases produced in our day-to-day lives through burning fossil fuels for electricity, heating and transportation etc. The carbon footprint is a measurement of all greenhouse gases we individually produce and has units of tonnes (or kg) of carbon dioxide equivalent.⁴

If science can put forward examples of the uniqueness of human creation, it makes sense that the Lord God would also form humanity with the ultimate example of uniqueness. Science affirms the reality of God and God's creative powers. Howard Thurman posits the "working paper of the individual is made up of a creative synthesis of what the man is in all his parts and how he reacts to the living process."⁵ That makeup of a person's march through life is as unique as a snow crystal. Each person born into this world develops a spiritual 'carbon footprint' that (whether known or unknown) affects the kingdom of God through community and spiritual growth.

The life journey (carbon footprint) of an individual is unique in this same way. God's call to ministry came in 1993. However, God does not begin a person's ministry at the time of the acceptance of the call into practical ministry or even upon entrance into seminary; God begins a person's ministry upon entrance into the world at birth. It is a

⁴ SmartEcoEnergy, *Reducing Your Carbon Footprint*, accessed April 21, 2013, http://www.smartecoenergy.org/carbon_footprint.php.

⁵ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1976), 110.

journey not measured in units of calculation, but one measured in moments of faith, heartache, and love.

There are permanent legacies of activism imbedded within a person's life journey. It is through such persons that the exploits of racial, economic and educational injustices received full exposure to the light of truth. The struggles of parents to successfully raise a family of eight persons in a five-room house were not easy. When you factor in the segregation and racism during these early years, it was a great challenge.

Having the privilege to grow up in the community of Turner Station, Maryland, a segregated low-income community rich with Black history and a legacy of social justice, proved both formative and informative. The community educated and developed its own business owners, professionals, entertainers, and athletes. The years living in Turner Station were years of social protest, academic achievement, and community values. This was a mostly rental community of thousands of Black residents. Turner Station produced great contributors to the fields of medicine, business, politics, science, community, sports, and entertainment.

Persons who made a profound impact include Kweisi Mfume, a native of Turner Station. Mr. Mfume became a national and international figure, serving as a local Councilman, U.S. Congressman, and, ultimately, President of the NAACP. He left an impression of one fighting for the powerless and marginalized in society. Along with Mr. Mfume was the late U.S. Congressman Parren J. Mitchell. Congressman Mitchell's exploits of courage and resolve for Black equality remain legendary in the African-American communities of Baltimore City and Baltimore County even today.

Congressman Mitchell became Maryland's first Black member of Congress and a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus. Congressman Mitchell's tireless efforts against South African Apartheid included fighting for businesses owned and controlled by the socially and economically disadvantaged and promoting economic justice in general. This too left an indelible impression.

Turner Station experienced both the pleasures and pains of integration and desegregation. Relationships between Blacks and Whites during the early years spoke loudly to the failures as well as the possibilities of successful public school integration. Learning, as a child, that being Black came with cultural limitations, left a recollection of unfairness on the adolescent heart and mind.

Turner Station stood as a place of provision and vision during the early years. It is here where he receives the basics of security (food, clothing, shelter, and security) as well as a sense of and lesson on family values and community. It is here where one learns that family and community are powerful blessings as well as opportunities to challenge the status quo.

The decade of the 1960s was an era that includes the vocal opposition, socio-political injustice, and hard-fought victories of challenges to the institution of segregation. It was the civil rights era—a time of major courtroom, congressional, and public opinion battles. It was a time for taking risks to demand justice and equality for the Black community in education, employment, and politics. Almost daily, accounts of denial rendered upon those within his community as they ventured outside of Turner Station to centers of commerce and recreation that included few persons of color.

Growing up in a two-parent household with five brothers came with many lessons in hard work and survival. Parents taught these lessons of hard work, conviction of decency, and continual learning. Life in a segregated community brings with it the ‘troubled’ waters of inequality. Hearing neighbors talk of unfair hiring practices and denials of job promotions due to discrimination reminded this young mind of the need to fight for righteousness in the public arena of life. Thankfully, God continues to provide a bridge over ‘troubled’ waters.

While college courses in St. Louis, Missouri, explored the import of the scriptures, close and personal racial slurs, threats of violence from Iowa’s citizens-band radio users, drunken bikers in Florida, and others exercising racial injustice were the lessons learned during the four years of undergraduate study. In fact, the experience while walking to a local grocery store of drawn handguns by surrounding police officers remained embedded in memory. Such events stoke the ‘fire in the belly’ of social justice during the 1970s and 1980s.

God’s call to ministry came in the early fall of 1993. The father-in-the-ministry was Reverend Dr. Emmett C. Burns, Jr. (hereinafter Pastor Burns). Pastor Burns, a protégé of civil rights martyr Medgar Evers, helped to shape the journey toward social justice and human rights. Pastor Burns consistently preached on social justice from the pulpit and eventually became a Maryland State Delegate on a platform promoting issues of social justice and fairness for the disadvantaged, especially as they related to the African-American community.

The theological training (Masters of Divinity degree from the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology, Virginia Union University) allowed for engagement in a journey of truth concerning a God who speaks out of humanity's present ethos of chaos and disorder. It is a journey of purpose and place within the community of God and reaching beyond to the wider community.

Accepting the call of God and of the congregation of First Baptist Church of Manassas, Virginia, to serve as its Senior Pastor was a major step in the journey. The preaching and teaching of Christian Scripture stands as an affirmation of the greatest power on earth, a power of God given to people of faith, a power that enables the church body to become a radiant, dynamic, loving, world-changing people of God. Every experience, conviction, and action brings with it a decision. Each step in the life journey influences and relates to one another through measured life experiences and cultural and environmental upbringing. Each Christian and each congregation develops a spiritual 'carbon footprint' that (known or unknown) affects the kingdom of God.

Context of the Ministry

First Baptist Church is a Christian congregation established in October, 1872. It is located in northern Virginia and a part of the expanding metropolitan Washington, District of Columbia region. Specifically, First Baptist Church resides in the City of Manassas, Virginia. The City of Manassas (hereinafter “Manassas”) is located thirty-five miles southwest of Washington and is surrounded by Prince William County, Virginia, except for a small segment of the city which borders the incorporated city of Manassas Park.

What is now the Manassas began in the 1800s as a small northern Virginia enclave—an area of plantations and dairy farms. It is the place where the Civil War experienced the First and Second Battles of Manassas or Battles of Bull Run. The growth and development of Manassas occurred subsequent to the Civil War’s end. In 1893, private funding established the Manassas Industrial School for Coloreds. The school provided formalized academic and vocational instruction and training for the Black population throughout northern Virginia. It was not until the late 1930s that this private industrial school for Blacks was transformed into a regional public school for Blacks living in northern Virginia.

By the 1970s, the town annexed land from Prince William County thereby increasing the population by nearly three thousand and adding large amounts of undeveloped land with which to develop a comprehensive plan for future growth. As with any rapid growth, the cost of living (owner and rental housing) in the area also grew

rapidly, albeit at a slower pace than its northern neighbors of Fairfax County and Washington. Manassas soon became an independent city nestled in the heart of a rapidly changing region.

The region which incubated Manassas is a culturally, economically, and ethnically diverse region with an emergent immigrant population. Manassas has seen steady growth in population and housing construction. However, with the growth came increased traffic congestion and rising housing costs. Manassas is now home for large numbers of commuters and transplants responding to the settlement of governmental, defense, telecommunications, and Information Technology (IT) businesses in the area. The region continues to experience dramatic structural shifts in demographics.

Future Needs Outlined by Manassas

Manassas is in the early stages of recasting its vision. There is a great desire among the residents and political structure of the city to reach beyond itself and the community for economic, technological, advantages that comes with its status and city size. It continues to attempt, uncompromisingly, to bridge the gap between old Manassas and new metropolitan Manassas. The racial makeup of the city is diverse and holding relatively steady. The demographics in the city represent a balanced population of youth, young adults, adults, and seniors. Projections for Manassas show an upward trend in population growth. The ethnic diversity of the population continues the trend of diversity among residents. The largest groups continue to be White, Black, and Hispanic. There is a balance among the gender population, with males comprising 51% and females 49%.

Age demographics point to a large adult population between the ages of twenty-five and forty-nine years and a significant population between the ages of zero and fourteen years. These numbers suggest a significant number of families within the population.

Manassas is considered a middle-income municipality with home values in line with middle-income levels. The median household income is \$73,000.⁶ Employment numbers indicate a strong private sector base of white collar jobs and a significant numbers of federal, state, and local government employees. The preferred mode of transportation is the private automobile, although the work-day commuter population continues to expand due to increasing traffic congestion in the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. area. A third of the working population holds a college degree. According to the 2010 Census, Prince William County, Virginia has 402,002 residents.⁷ The County government recently released an annual report in which Prince William County is reported to rate as one of the nation's premier communities.⁸ The report attributes the accolades to the county's dedication to government leadership in pursuing job growth, community development, and sound financial management. Although Prince William County governmental leaders have made strides in improving conditions within the

⁶ City of Manassas, *2009 Key Demographics Report* (Manassas, VA: Office of Community Development, September 7, 2009), accessed May 5, 2011, <http://www.manassascity.org/DocumentCenter/Home/View/3184>.

⁷ Prince William County Government, *Current and Proposed Election Districts: 2010 Demographic Characteristics*, (Document Library), accessed April 23, 2013, <http://www.pwcgov.org/government/dept/finance/Documents/Prince%20William%20Report%202010%204th%20Q.pdf>.

⁸ Prince William County Government, "Prince William County Rated as One of Nation's Premier Communities," in *Annual Report Office of Executive Management* (Prince William, VA: Office of Executive Management, 2011), 1, accessed May 5, 201, <http://www.pwcgov.org/doclibrary/PDF/13560.pdf-2011-01-31>.

county, the jobless rate remains unusually high among the marginalized and poor within the county. See Appendix A for Manassas demographic tables.

Parallel Growth of First Baptist Church

First Baptist Church is nestled within the historic district of Manassas. It is just two blocks from the center of the city and city hall. It was a spiritual awakening to the needs of the Black community that a few dedicated men and women sought the help of the Lord to establish a place of worship within the community known as the Manassas Junction. Following emancipation from slavery and realizing divine providence for a new life, members of the Black community had a burning desire to organize as a Christian faith community. In July 1872, Rev. Marshall Downing Williams, assisted by Rev. S.W. Madden, met with local people in Manassas to seek the help of the Lord God to organize a church that would allow the newly freed Blacks to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth as well as to serve and labor diligently in Christian ministry. According to church records, the American Baptist Home Missionary Society became aware of the need in Manassas for spiritual leadership. They sent the young missionary, Marshall Downing Williams, to organize and establish a place of worship and service in the Manassas area. The First Baptist Church of Manassas grew from this meeting. Their first service of this organized Christian body took place on the second Sunday in October of 1872. First Baptist Church was the first and only predominantly Black Baptist congregation in this rural northern Virginia enclave. All prominent and professional Blacks who attended Christian worship services were members of First Baptist Church. The church continued

to serve the Black community through the late 1800s and first half of the twentieth century. Manassas began an aggressive growth strategy throughout the 1950s and the 1960s

In the 1980s, First Baptist Church membership continued to increase. Membership expanded at an annual growth rate of approximately 10%. The congregation's largest ethnic group continued to be Black and is presently 97%. Ethnic diversity is represented by White, Hispanic, and Asian members. There is a slight female population advantage; females comprise 58% of the congregation. Age demographics point to a large adult population with a significant population of children and youth. These numbers indicate a significant number of families with children within the congregation. The majority of members reside within Manassas. See Appendix A for First Baptist Church demographic tables.

The rapid influx of persons into First Baptist Church mirrored the rapid influx of citizens into Manassas and Prince William County. The church dedicated a new and larger sanctuary on October 27, 1990. In August of 2002, First Baptist Church called its next Senior Pastor. Presently, the church is leading the way in implementing the church's vision of "Moving the Kingdom Forward through Faith."

Each local congregation is a community of God consisting of a demography that can be described in terms of numbers, age, and sex, racial, and jurisdictional profiles. It is not uncommon, for people who gather as a local congregation to share some common social and cultural conventions, while also seeking to gain diversity. Healthy congregations are always in the midst of balancing the old and new within the local body

of Christ. Local congregations live and breathe in the symmetry between entrenched traditions and new realities of ministry and mission as a living church empowered by the Lord. First Baptist Church is no different. The membership, as of January 2010, is 1,014 members. Nearly 97% of the population is classified as Black, 1% White, 1% multi-racial, and less than 1% for Hispanic and Asian ethnicities. In regards to gender, the congregation is fairly balanced with 58% of the population female and 42% male.

Current trends display a growing young population and families with children. The young adult population (ages 19 and under) comprise nearly a quarter of the church population. The adult population (ages 20-24) comprises two-thirds of the church population. The senior citizen population (ages 65 and over) comprises just under 10% of the church population. In addition, the picture of jurisdictional boundaries for the various congregants and families show a close connection to the Manassas community and an expanding surrounding jurisdictional population. Nearly 60% of the congregation is residents of Manassas. Nearly a quarter of the congregants reside in surrounding Prince William County. Just over 12% resident in other surrounding counties and 5% reside in Manassas Park. See Appendix A for First Baptist Church of Manassas demographic tables.

Growing Social Needs of the Surrounding Community

The poorer population within Prince William County is growing rapidly. Due to the lack of adequate affordable housing, the population of working poor is burgeoning and placing a larger burden on governmental programs for low-income assistance.

Despite the growing need, governmental budgets have remained static and fewer people gain access to the assistance. Until the recent housing bubble collapse, real estate costs and home values rose each year. After experiencing in recent years one of the largest foreclosure rates in the Commonwealth of Virginia, Prince William County is now experiencing a slow turnaround. Social justice organizations such as V.O.I.C.E., of which First Baptist Church is a member congregation, continue to press the largest banks involved in the home foreclosures. First Baptist Church serves an ever-growing population of persons needing living assistance (housing, transportation, utilities, and food, medical). A program dedicated to the care of HIV/AIDS patients recently closed and a battered shelter for women established in 2005 faces funding challenges.

With the growing population within the community of immigrants (documented and undocumented), there has been an accusation that the noticeable increase in the unemployment of Black youth and young adults is tied to the undocumented Hispanic influx. Initially, this created some tension between the two communities; however, it is abating due to the community organizing efforts of community initiatives such as V.O.I.C.E.

In poorer economic pockets of the county, students' educational test scores continue to lag and incidences of youth and gang violence remain high. Although more affordable housing units are needed in the region, the number of affordable housing units

either on the market or being developed remain static at best but shrinking in comparison to the growing need within the county.⁹

Homelessness is pervasive and increasing in the Prince William County and the Manassas area. Although benevolent giving has risen within the faith and philanthropic communities, the local homeless shelters and food banks have seen an exponential rise in those in need.¹⁰ Although Prince William County is a minority majority population, no persons of color have ever served on the governing Board of Supervisors. Attempts to address social justice concerns with the Prince William County governing Board of Supervisors has yielded little impact or redress of concerns.

From a theological perspective, First Baptist Church is a predominantly African American, historically autonomous Baptist church that is Christ-centered in worship, yet finding itself challenged to maximize its outreach beyond 'self.' The classification of the majority of the congregation is professional and middle income. Although there is relative unity within the congregation itself, there are still vestiges of implied attitudes of exclusivity within the called out community of God.

In 2006, for the first time in the church's 134-year history, it established a vision statement that says, "We will become a spiritually connected church family that reaches out and ministers to an economically, culturally, diverse community!" In this statement, the congregation acknowledges the necessity of community, but it has yet to comprehend

⁹ Prince William County Government, *Prince William Area FY2011 Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)* (Woodbridge, VA: Prince William County, 2011), accessed December 30, 2011, <http://www.pwcgov.org/doclibrary/PDF/15082.pdf>.

¹⁰ Prince William County Government, *Human Services Strategic Plan Task Force*, accessed December 30, 2011, <http://www.pwcgov.org/doclibrary/PDF/009286.pdf>.

fully the need for a greater evangelistic and prophetic good beyond the local church body. The church's mission work has only recently become intentionally mission-minded in its own local and international practices of sending missionaries from within the congregation. Formerly, First Baptist Church was a small town congregation nestled in the midst of an expanding city population. As the emergent immigrant population began coming into the city and needing economic assistance, the congregation finds itself no longer a small congregation, but a larger one that must wrestle with how to walk in God's expansion movement.

Church discipleship that produces positive growth in the grace, knowledge, and unity in the Lord depends upon the involvement of clergy and laity being simultaneously engaged in meaningful ministry, mission, and vision. Traditional paradigms in the local Black Baptist church often limit the identification of church leadership to that of clergy and ordained laity (diaconate ministry). There is agreement that the spiritual and administrative leadership of the church remains tethered to the pastoral staff and ordained laity. However, for purposes of biblical knowledge and ministry, the church can more effectively execute its biblical mission by expanding the definition of instructional church leadership to include the Christian Education ministry (lay directors and classroom instructors). Church discipleship and ministry is impacted by two core disciplines—preaching and teaching. Often, the focus has been exclusive to the preaching discipline; however, Scripture offers import to the teaching discipline of the local church. Therefore, leadership within First Baptist Church consists not only of clergy (pastoral staff) and ordained laity (diaconate), but for purposes of ministry, it includes Christian Education

(Officers and Sunday School Teachers). It is the instruction in the Word of God that encourages the congregation to actively engage in a spiritual dynamic of practical ministry. Therefore, this project offers a new paradigm of church leadership to include the instructional discipline of Christian Education. The project employs the use of Adult Sunday School teachers to execute the classroom teachings in the project.

Leadership Structure and Process

First Baptist Church is structured as an autonomous evangelical Baptist congregation organized under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Congregational autonomy gives First Baptist Church the right to choose its own leadership, to establish its own covenant membership and discipline and confessions, to order its life through its own constitution, to implement its rights to belong to other denominational agencies and ecumenical church bodies, to own its own property, and to control its budget. The local church is the key. It is free, through the aid of the Holy Spirit, to govern its own affairs, to order its own worship, and to decide how and with what other churches to relate. Decisions are made or affirmed by the members of First Baptist Church under its constitution and accepted Baptist polity. Members of the congregation are involved in making decisions and are kept informed of all activities that take place at the leadership level on a regular basis through church business meetings. The membership elects or affirms its own church leadership. Although First Baptist Church is autonomous, it is not without affiliation. It works closely with other Baptist and ecumenical faith organizations and agencies.

The Conjunction of Ministry Focus

Within Manassas and the larger Prince William County community there exists opportunities to awaken the social consciousness of the People toward God's created humanity suffering of the circumstances of the 'least of these among us'. First Baptist Church is positioning itself in Christ to be a prophetic voice and personalized invitation among the people. There is a desperate need for a transformed purpose and a prophetic voice willing to stand among the people of the Manassas/Prince William County community and speak truth to power regarding the lack of program and priority for the basic needs of low and middle-income individuals and families.

The conjunction between the life of the Senior Pastor and the life of First Baptist Church lies in the journey of diminished role and purpose. Both have experienced the direct effects of racism and marginalization through various stages of life. At the various junctions, reaction included disgust and anger, but never one of action. This contradicts the rich legacy and mentoring experienced over the years. These turning points in life should have given greater resolve to become involved in matters of social justice. Each time the response has been one of anger, but never action. Too often, the reaction remained simply a notation on the injustices of life, but never a conjoiner to action for resolution of the injustices. Having been raised in the shadows of civil rights activists and served under the pastorate of a regional giant of social activism, the inaction demonstrated that the root of social justice still laid dormant.

Since the founding of the church shortly after the Civil War, the First Baptist Church has been a victim of social injustice through the legal and cultural segregation and Jim Crow legislation enforced throughout the South, including Manassas. Through the years, the church has been a stalwart in local worship and fellowship. It galvanized the Black community in Manassas and mutually supported other churches for decades. However, since the post civil rights era and removal of legal segregation there has been a growth of the Black middle class and a slow entrenchment of priestly functioning within the body of Christ. The church has been intentional in evangelizing, but often quiet on matters of prophetic ministry (social justice, in particular). Social justice has become a lower priority than evangelizing. Programs that address daily spiritual needs are thriving (priestly functions of ministry); however, much less interest is shown for addressing systemic change that requires confronting the political and social institutions (prophetic functions of ministry).

The opportunity to revitalize the prophetic function of church ministry gained renewed hope in 2007, when community organizers and local pastors began a dialogue to create a faith-based social justice organization. There exists a need to effect change in local politics and business (particular regarding the need for adequate affordable housing). The need requires a focus on addressing the socio-political oppression of the poor and marginalized of Prince William County (including Manassas).

It is through the mixing of trial, error, and truth that a person discovers the abundant grace, teachings, and plan of God for oneself and the people of God. Lifelong recollections, feelings, and personal experiences have exposed the author to significant

outrage at local government's disregard for the poor and powerless. It is now that same mixture of life experiences which are rising to produce the desired and envisioned product—real commitment to social justice in the Manassas/Prince William County community.

Connecting the responsibility for proclamation and teaching of God's prophetic Word of spiritual and social justice to the practical local ministry of First Baptist Church and its members is needed. With this new understanding, one recognizes opportunities to relate, teach, and preach prophetically to those seeking to know God rather than simply to know about God.

The anger of injustice lingers within the heart and mind of the preacher. It is not an anger of hate but of passion to defend and improve the lot and life of those experiencing socio-political injustices and oppression. It caused an awakening to deal assertively with social injustices that run against the moral principles of God's mandate to love God and love neighbor as self.

The former small town congregation of First Baptist Church now finds itself nestled in the midst of an expanding and diverse population. The expansions and growing ethnic diversity within the community has uncovered strains of relationship and governmental priority toward this diversity. For decades, the congregation embodied an almost exclusively inward focus. Such a focus strengthens family ties, but weakens the church's mission to transformation.

No longer a small congregation; First Baptist Church must explore how to walk in God's expansive movement of social justice. There is a need to become engaged, to

rethink the purpose of the church in community. Twenty-first century ministry will require the church to revisit and reengage in the greater matters of social justice and, through theological lenses, explore the homiletic and instructional approaches for addressing them.

In a sense, the struggles of First Baptist Church mirror a similar struggle within the author. The common ingredient between pastor, people, and community is the need for an organized and informed engagement in local matters of social justice and outreach. There is a need to revisit the pathways of Christian engagement in community outreach. There exists an opportunity to develop a ministry that gives every member a realistic opportunity to engage in such efforts. First Baptist Church can position itself to be a prophetic voice of social justice with and in the local community.

The Problem Statement

This project challenges a mindset that promotes personal and congregational piety that is disconnected from personal and congregational responsibility toward social justice. The project addresses the need for an intentional revision in the local church to incorporate a practical theology for social justice among clergy and laity leadership. It addresses this needed revision through Christian Education and proclamation—Practical Theology and Liberation Theology. Such a revision will revive the social justice ethic as a main part of Christian praxis and become the foundation for the local congregation. Such a renewal has the potential to engender within local congregations greater

participation in the church's social justice programs and faith-based community organizing initiatives.

The current social-economic-political system of Prince William County is in need of comprehensive concern and pragmatic action on behalf of its marginalized elements. The strong voice of the Christian church needs to be discovered to unfold glimpses of God's agenda of social justice as illustrated by the words and actions of the Hebrew prophet Amos in Amos 5:21-24 and by Jesus the Christ in Luke 20:45-47:

I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.
Amos 5:6-7; 21-24

While all the people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, "Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely."
Luke 20: 45-47

The Word of God gives authority to the local church to speak and act out on matters of social justice in an informed and passionate manner. The Word of God has much to say on the subject of social justice. The Christian church exists, in part, to transmit and actuate God's agenda of social justice as delineated throughout the Biblical texts. In the past, First Baptist Church attempted to address social justice through limited ministerial responsibility within the local body or to eschew the topic altogether. Social

justice, as a matter of program participation, became the onus of a particular ministry within the congregation. Mark Labberton, professor of preaching at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, posits a possible shift in the understanding of social justice by churches that historically viewed such matters as outside of their evangelical purpose.¹¹ Professor Labberton argues that broader cultural and generational changes have brought about an awakening to issues of injustice. In the Black church, it is a reawakening of the value of social justice within the prophetic praxis of the church.

The issue of social justice, according to Scripture, has always been an integral part of the ethics of the Christian church. Some pastors and churches give a sense of spiritualizing the meaning of “justice” and “righteousness.” They intentionally or unintentionally negate the practical responsibility and concrete practice of social justice in the ‘here and now’ in relationship within the church and local community. However, it has historically been the position of the Black church to acknowledge the import and mandate of social justice as an integral part of the church’s call to action.

A larger segment of First Baptist Church must struggle to understand its divine role of social consciousness to the rapidly expanding community of Prince William County and Manassas and their civic authorities. This social consciousness is deemed a struggle because it involves revealing and prioritizing the teachings and commandments before the church body in various Christian education settings. It also challenges individuals to live out those principles and practices in their daily lives. This rarely occurs without a struggle.

¹¹ Mark Labberton, 2010. “A Mighty River or a Slippery Slope? Examining the Cultural and Theological Forces behind the New Interest in Justice,” *Leadership* 31, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 20-24.

The message of the prophets is a message that calls God's people back to our original purpose as the people of God. Yet the Apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 7:15-23, we often must struggle to do the will of God. Of the more than one thousand First Baptist Church congregants, only a relatively few are actively engaged in social justice endeavors. Past dialogue between pastor and laity on matters of biblical justification for social justice revealed a lack of clear understanding of the biblical support for the obligation toward social justice to the marginalized—an obligation that goes beyond evangelistic proselytizing and non-political endeavors such as feeding and clothing programs.

When requested by the clergy and laity leadership to actively participate in large actions, nearly the entire congregation failed to offer active partnership and participation. During the last ten years, the clergy of First Baptist Church rarely preached the message of the eighth-century Hebrew prophets despite being located just outside Washington, D.C., in the shadows of recent socio-political and public debates concerning healthcare and other forms of assistance to the nation's poor and marginalized. There is a cacophony of moral vision for the local community these last few years. There are many who are inactive in response to social injustice and on the other hand there is a small group within First Baptist Church who has taken a step toward active response to social injustice by becoming involved in V.O.I.C.E. First Baptist Church is a member within the V.O.I.C.E organization.

The Internet has provided greater and faster contact with others and has resulted in more extensive information regarding human inequality, marginalization, and abuse of

the poor both locally and worldwide.¹² Information is readily available to congregates regarding the injustices occurring in their community. Although this may be true, the issue of social justice, as revealed in Scripture, has always been an integral part of the ethics of the Christian church. Some pastors are spiritualizing of the meaning of justice and righteousness while negating, intentionally or unintentionally, the practical responsibility and concrete practice of social justice in the ‘here and now’ within the church and local community. However, it has historically been the position of the Black church to acknowledge the import and mandate of social justice as an integral part of the church’s call to action.

In 2009, during a routine county board meeting, the Prince William County Board of Supervisors attempted to remove all language referencing affordable housing from the county’s comprehensive planning document, a document that sets the vision for the next 25 years of county planning, expansion, and priority. The V.O.I.C.E. organization was able to obtain the document in advance of a final vote and was present to object to the wholesale deletion of language regarding governmental support and planning for affordable housing. Due to the efforts of V.O.I.C.E., the affordable housing language remained in the comprehensive planning document for Prince William County.

A misunderstanding or lack of understanding of the prophetic function of the church body in its faith obligation to act as an agent of social justice can be detrimental to the local congregation and community. It becomes detrimental to the local congregation in that it may limit the full potential to champion and challenge social, political, and

¹² Ibid.

economic injustices of government, business, and faith communities upon the poor, marginalized, and oppressed in its community. It disencumbers the individual Christian and congregation's biblical obligation toward social justice. This lowers the internal conscious value of social justice within the individual. Once the individual is isolated from the obligation, its natural movement is to injure the larger Christian community obligation toward social justice. This must change!

When social justice becomes the import of a single ministry within the local congregation, it limits the dialogue and discourse concerning social justice and ultimately forces a limited scope on such an important part of the Christian mission. Limitations of resources and commitment of any one ministry restricts a church's potential outcomes and practices and leads to a de facto marginalization of matters concerning social justice.¹³ Despite resource limitations, First Baptist Church remains obligated to God to engage in social justice within and beyond the walls of its congregation.

The response of governmental leadership is unpersuasive. The bond-rating agency of the County garners greater attention than the lack of bread and healthcare for the very citizens it presumes to care and govern. There is negligible effectual discourse for compassionate care for the marginalized.

Efforts to engage governmental and business sectors of local society in effectual dialogue for substantive and long-term change in policy and practice are largely unproductive. Cooperative engagement by leaders and laity within the faith community has been paltry at best. One could conclude that many local clergy, by their practices,

¹³ James M. Childs, *Preaching Justice: The Ethical Vocation of Word and Sacrament Ministry* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), x.

believe the purpose of clergy and the church is to remain largely priestly in form and function. Clergy focus primarily on the importance of individual godly living, worship, and events that address the spiritual needs of its congregants. The priestly function is a vital function of the Christian church, yet it must not neglect its prophetic function as an agent of change for biblical justice. This retains the high value for social justice as a core value within the practices of the congregation. If a greater segment of the faith community, in particular First Baptist Church, can be encouraged to engage in matters of social justice, and if the value of social justice within the consciousness of the congregation can be raised, supported by Christian Scriptures, First Baptist Church, Prince William County and Manassas will be the better for it.

In 2004, researcher Sandra Barnes published an article in the *Social Problems* journal entitled “Priestly and Prophetic Influences on Black Church Social Services” that echoes these sentiments on priestly and prophetic influence. “A prophetic function suggests that, just as a religious conversion should alter one’s personal life, such a change may be questioned if not accompanied by the desire and willingness to mobilize collectively to affect societal improvements or serve as an agent of resistance and protest.”¹⁴

Foundations for a Solution

Authentic prophetic preaching and teaching draws the Christian faith community into God’s reality. However, it is a reality which disturbs and disrupts the comfort and

¹⁴ Sandra L Barnes, “Priestly and Prophetic Influences on Black Church Social Services,” *Social Problems* 51, no. 2 (May 2004): 202-221.

contentment with conventional wisdom to remain priestly in function alone. It is the responsibility of clergy and the Christian teaching ministries to lay out the nexus between prophetic and pastoral ministry and the biblical mandate to integrate both equally into the life and ministry of the congregation.

The prophetic ministry of pastors is not optional; it is required as a vital characteristic of their role and identity. When fully embraced, the prophetic ministry weaves itself into the fabric of Christian Kerygma (i.e., preaching and teaching). It is ill advised to limit matters of social justice to a consigned corner of ministry within a Christian congregation. However, expanding the considerations of social justice within the full offerings of Christian discipleship increases the chance of attracting larger numbers of Christian participants to organized efforts of social justice and actions including protesting social injustices that marginalize and oppress the poor and powerless.

The classical eighth-century prophets, after allowance for social, contextual, and textual distortion, offer relevant examples of social justice as a revitalizing and inspiring resource for contemporary Christian proclamation and praxis within the Black church in general, and First Baptist Church, in particular. A critical examination of the ideologies and theologies of social justice in selected writings in the Biblical canon will be used to promote an understanding of social justice praxis.

The project will entail the development of a sermon series (proclamation) synchronized with an Adult Sunday School curriculum (four Sunday school lessons). The program will be provided to aid in advancing the biblical foundations for the commitment

of First Baptist Church to become an informed and active agent for social justice within Prince William County and beyond (praxis).

There must be a re-awakening within the Black church to learn that it has never simply been a praying and worshipping community caring only for the soul. The Black church must be encouraged to once again, embrace its' prophetic dimension to stand as a moral agent of God that sees and reacts as God does to injustice. The objective is manifestation of a greater understanding of social justice, ministry dialogue, and innovative application within First Baptist Church's actions in Prince William County, Manassas, and northern Virginia.

A prophetic proclamation and teaching praxis of clergy and laity within First Baptist Church offers a more complete and full witness of the Christian scriptures and will of God to world. As worship and praise are not ends in themselves to the plan of the church, authenticity requires attention to the Black church's role of producing practical manifestations of its witness toward social justice. This is possible only if the whole congregation (clergy and laity) spiritually and practically engages in comprehending the biblical writings and narratives that support the goal of social justice in local context. An intentional learning process uplifts the value of social justice within Black church practical theology. The goal is to reestablish the importance for a permanent revision of self-possibilities in Christ. It is a goal that benefits the individual, congregation, and the local and global community.

The church validates its prophetic witness toward God's social justice, as supported by Scripture, by raising its internal value of social justice within the practical

mission, communal, and internal works of social justice within the individual First Baptist Church congregant and the entire congregation. One opportunity to expand the prophetic witness into the surrounding communities is by increasing membership participation in social justice endeavors such as the community organizing efforts for political and social change of V.O.I.C.E.

Through prophetic preaching and teaching praxis, clergy and laity proclaim and engage congregational hearers to embrace a transformation of thought and action that translates theological viewpoints closer toward God's worldview of social justice (righteousness, love, and justice toward God and humanity). It involves the interpretation of Christian faith, as exemplified in the Christian Bible. Prophetic preaching and teaching praxis engages the hearers to avoid being a split personality in the practical theologies of their lives. It is not wise to separate body and soul between the priestly and prophetic, as one informs the other.

Through prophetic proclamation and teachings, the sermon and classroom aids the hearer in proper interpretation of the faith and moves the individual Christian and church body to engage in relevant tasks and ministries. Preaching and teaching the importance of a prophetic ministry not only informs the urgency of empowerment to defend against the struggles of life, but also to defend others in their struggle against injustice. Therefore, the preacher and congregation are engaged in both pastoral and prophetic offices when preaching and teaching. The sermon and Christian classroom are engagements in understanding the truth of the Bible and its implications for our actions and attitudes to what is read or heard in the news and word on the street in the local context.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY PROJECT

Issues related to the model presented in this project have been the subject of works of scholarship and theology. In this chapter, a narrative analysis of the field of literature is included as it relates specifically to the ministry model presented herein rather than providing an exhaustive survey of the field of biblical social justice. The object of this ministerial focus is to understand and address the function and import of social justice and righteousness in the proclamation and Christian Education of First Baptist Church's practical theology and praxis within Manassas and Prince William County, Virginia. A review of biblical scriptures and social justice literature suggests that a Christian liberation pedagogy highlighting the prophetic, political, and social dimensions of ministry and integrating it within the Christian education (proclamation and group study) has the potential to engender a motivational response to participation in local church social justice efforts.

The literature review is organized according to historical, biblical, and theological perspectives. This writing challenges a wisdom that promotes personal and congregational piety that is disconnected from personal and congregational responsibility

toward social justice. An intentional revision in the local church, in particular the Black church, back to a practical theology for social justice among clergy and laity leadership and laity leadership in Christian Education and proclamation (Practical Theology and Liberation Theology) will revive the social justice ethic as an important part of Christian praxis and foundation.

Traditions of the Black Church

It is advantageous to define the historical values and social expressions that defined the path and role of Christian religion in the Black church. This is necessary to gauge current developments within the theology and praxis of the Black church concerning social justice as a normative exercise of Christian faith. The literature is examined for a critical understanding of the vision and progression of the Black church on matters of social justice and its importance as integral to the faith experience of the congregation and community it serves. The impact affects all structures of life, including the spiritual, social, economic, and political.

C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, authors of *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, offer a comprehensive historical overview of Black church history and its social dynamics.¹ This book aids in the comprehension of the sociology behind Black church formation and social praxis. Ultimately, the belief that today's Black church struggles for continued relevance in helping to bring resolution to the needs of

¹ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990).

social justice in local community forms the basis for this project. The book's authors note a challenge as they conclude:

As we mentioned, some studies have pointed out the increasing bifurcation of the black community into two main class divisions: a coping sector of middle-income working-class and middle-class black communities, and a crisis sector of poor black communities, involving the working poor and the dependent poor....The challenge for the future is whether black clergy and their churches will attempt to transcend class boundaries and reach out to the poor, as these class lines continue to solidify with demographic changes in black communities.²

In *We have Been Believers: An African-American Systematic Theology*, James H. Evans, Jr. demonstrates a methodology and historical analysis of the Black church that helps define the concepts of church praxis and theological reflection. Evans argues for the church to assume a mandate of public redemption through Christian praxis, in spite of the frailty of the church's faith. "The church is understood to be the company of the elect who are chosen for service."³

In *Black Church Studies: An Introduction* Stacey Floyd-Thomas et al. present insights into the history, power, and engagement of the Black church as an unrivaled institution affecting Black culture. This work reveals Black thought and the emerging Black church as it created a platform toward the formation of its praxis in Christian tradition.⁴

² Ibid., 384.

³ James H. Evans, *We Have Been Believers: An African-American Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 129.

⁴ Stacey Floyd-Thomas, et al., "Black Church History." In *Black Church Studies: An Introduction*, 3-47. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007).

In *The History of the Negro Church*, Carter G. Woodson traces the inception and history of the Black church in North America. This work developed the evidence of a paradigm shift after the civil war in which the church gained a new understanding of Christian praxis and its social role in the Black community.⁵ Robert Michael Franklin, in *Liberating Visions: Human Fulfillment and Social Justice in African-American Thought*, shifts to a contemporary dynamic by reviewing the voices of justice in African-American society that have been major players in the development of moral thinking and social criticism in North America.⁶

Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation, the chapters include several sources of biblical interpretation from authors who discuss the African slave sense of identity and community based on their Christian religion and its progression through the generations. This book articulates a Black theology critical of a Christian theology inattentive to the plight of the oppressed and blind to the actions of an oppressive system.⁷ David T. Shannon, the author of Chapter Five, "An Ante-bellum Sermon: A Resource for an African American Hermeneutic," wrote the following.

⁵ Carter G. Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church* (Washington, DC: The Associated Publishers, 1972).

⁶ Robert Michael Franklin, *Liberating Visions: Human Fulfillment and Social Justice in African-American Thought* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990).

⁷ Cain Hope Felder, ed., *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991).

The suffering of the African Americans was immeasurably oppressive, but they overcame the temptation to succumb to defeatism and escapism. They overcame such challenges and persisted in hope. This was their long-term strategy. Ultimate liberation would have been useless without psychic and physical survival. This hope is expressed by the exilic prophet who spoke to the people of Israel who were in exile, and declared that their state of oppression was over. Although they had lost their land, temple, and leaders, he assured them that God had not forgotten them and that a new day was dawning.⁸

In *Black Church Beginnings*, Henry H. Mitchell traces the evolution of the modern Black church, beginning with its active engagement in the anti-slavery movement to its eventual outgrowth as an abolitionist voice for social justice. This work was useful in positing that the African influences of spiritual fervor and community accountability remain for social uplift in Black churches and their local communities. This reveals the impact of the emerging Black church as an institution of communal relevance.⁹

This Far by Faith: Stories from the African American Religious Experience by Juan Williams and Quinton Dixie support the premise of the Civil Rights Movement as revelatory of God's transformative power. The transformative power gains expression through the social justice workings of the Black church and its leadership. This book can be used to posit the influence of the Black church in the Civil Rights Movement as a powerful force for social change and stability.¹⁰ Furthermore the book, *God and Race in*

⁸ David T. Shannon, "An Ante-bellum Sermon: A Resource for an African American Hermeneutic," in *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Cain Hope Felder (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 122.

⁹ Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004).

¹⁰ Juan Williams and Quinton Dixie, *This Far by Faith: Stories from the African American Religious Experience* (New York, NY: Harper-Collins, 2003).

American Politics: A Short History by Mark A. Noll, provides useful information to develop the important and early element of social justice as a scriptural marker.¹¹

Concerning the historical writings on the Black church in the post-civil rights time, the book *Long March Ahead: African American Churches and Public Policy in Post-Civil Rights America* helped delineate and support the claim of a failed momentum within the Black church for social justice as critical to its role in expressing Black social grievances.¹² Furthermore, the book captures the essence of the social experiments of the 1960s, in regards to the Black church's involvement. Studies suggested that a high rate of Black churches were involved in providing social services supportive of adults and families, despite the financial limitations of congregants.¹³

In *Crisis in the Village: Restoring Hope in African American Communities*, Robert M. Franklin provides insightful and historical perspectives which have weakened the post-civil rights social position of the Black church in the local community. Demographic shifts and deficits in the knowledge and issues of the community within which the Black church often sits is a major factor in the diminishing social activism.

The Black Church in the Post-Civil Rights Era by Anthony B. Pinn details the influence of Black church worship on socioeconomic, cultural, and political praxis. Pinn outlines the positive promotion of the Black church's social gospel. He states, "Whereas many local churches chose a conservative path of limited resistance to social

¹¹ Mark A. Noll, *God and Race in American Politics: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

¹² R. Drew, ed., *Long March Ahead: African American Churches and Public Policy in Post-Civil Rights America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 77.

arrangements, others turned activist and participated in a struggle for equality that changed American society.”¹⁴ Pinn agrees with Franklin that, following the height of the Civil Rights Movement, there was a general decline in the reputation and dependence on the Black church in matters of social justice.

In *Black Spirituality and Black Consciousness: Soul Force, Culture and Freedom in the African-American Experience*, author Carlyle Fielding Stewart III posits that the Black church has historically thrived as a cultural center that celebrates the innovation and free expression of a prophetic praxis that finds its truth in social and external expression. Stewart argues for the Black church, as an institution, to continue as an instrument of human freedom in social context. Stewart states:

It does not suffice, then, for black people simply to be culturally and spiritually free in church on Sunday morning, for the simulation and praxis of such freedom must find social and external expression in the larger society. Historically, we have seen how movements for social change have been spawned, ignited, or influenced by the black church, and this is largely due to its genius in cultivating the ethos and norms that make free, soul force expression necessary in the personal realm while providing a rationale for translating that expression as protest in the social realm.¹⁵

¹⁴ Anthony B. Pinn, *The Black Church in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 10-11.

¹⁵ Carlyle Fielding Stewart, *Black Spirituality and Black Consciousness: Soul Force, Culture and Freedom in the African-American Experience* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1999), 108.

The Pastoral Function and Social Justice

In defining the classification of prophetic and pastoral functions for this project, the definitions expounded in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* prove important. This dictionary also provided relevant background information regarding the biblical treatment of distributive and procedural justice and helps to define the Biblical terminologies of justice and scriptural support in the writing.¹⁶

The 2011 national and international protests of discontent surrounding the multinational financial and banking corporations in the United States gave notice of a renewed protest against unjust economic systems. An examination was conducted of the literature concerning the biblical and theological support for and against a renewed exercise of a social gospel theology in the local church. *Just Preaching: Prophetic Voices for Economic Justice*, edited by Andre' Resner, Jr., was useful for these purposes. Its selections offered an understanding of the practical importance from the perspective of justice.¹⁷

The Pastor as Prophet, edited by Earl E. Shelp and Ronald H. Sunderland, posits an essential interdependence of proclamation to tie the connection between prophetic and pastoral ministries. This connects how the prophetic role of the pastor falls properly to the church as a community and to the congregation in particular. This notion is properly

¹⁶ Sakenfeld, Katharine Doob, ed., *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996).

¹⁷ Andre' Resner, ed., *Just Preaching: Prophetic Voices for Economic Justice* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2003).

supported in articles by Sandra L. Barnes entitled “Priestly and Prophetic Influences on Black Church Social Services” and “Black Church Culture and Community Action.” In these articles, Barnes provides data analysis supportive of the role of the contemporary Black church in addressing economic and social problems distressing the Black community and socio-proclamation to influence the level of congregational engagement and activism. These articles assisted in articulating a positive correlation between a socially activist congregation and the intentional prophetic preaching and education by clergy leadership within the local context.

In *The History of Ancient Israel and Judah: A Compilation*, the author Jerome Clayton Ross provided articulation of the Hebrew Scripture’s reconstructive purpose by ancient Israel needing to survive. The writers of the Christian Bible were people of context and culture. Their writings give observation to the relevant issues and contemporary perspectives of the day. As Ross states, “This implies that religious concerns are always intertwined with social concerns.”¹⁸ Ross makes the binding connection of the religious institution with social existence. Ross contends that social stratification and exploitation in cultural community can also affect the faith community; therefore, it is a natural process for the faith community to interject itself within the culture concerns of the day.

John C. Haughey, editor of *The Faith that Does Justice: Examining the Christian Sources for Social Change*, shares voices of the relevant theologians concerning the

¹⁸ Jerome Clayton Ross, *The History of Ancient Israel and Judah: A Compilation* (Pittsburgh, PA: Dorrance Publishing, 2003), 155.

moral imperatives found in Scripture that underpin action undertaken by Christians for political or social transformation. This work clarified the moral sensitivity of injustice and the relationship between Christian faith and social justice.¹⁹

In *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible* by Bruce V. Malchow, the writer shares the survey material from the Hebrew Bible, concentrating on the laws and biblical idealization of the texts for sociological import. This book gives voice to concepts of social injustice found in the Hebrew Bible. The book “examines what the Hebrew Bible has to say about social justice.”²⁰ Malchow contends that Israel incorporated Near Eastern social justice norms while making adjustments for its own cultural system and norms. This provides a model of ministry in which Christians remain adaptive and transformational in tenets of the faith, especially as they encounter cultural crises of oppression and injustice.

In *The Prophethood of Black Believers: An African American Political Theology* by J. Deotis Roberts, the author argues in defense of the Black church offering a ministry that encompasses personal, social, and public application. The acceptance of God’s word concerning social justice necessitates this viewpoint.²¹

In *There Shall Be No Needy: Pursuing Social Justice through Jewish Law and Tradition*, Rabbi Jill Jacobs addresses the questions of Judaism and social justice using

¹⁹ John C. Haughey, *The Faith that Does Justice: Examining the Christian Sources for Social Change*, ed. John C. Haughey (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1977), 1.

²⁰ Bruce V. Malchow, *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible: What is New and What is Old* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), xv.

²¹ J. Deotis Roberts, *The Prophethood of Black Believers: An African American Political Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994).

biblical and rabbinical texts. The book is a great historical writing on rabbinical thought concerning direct and indirect action for social justice. Jacobs introduces a detailed explanation of prophetic Judaism. In it, “the prophets remind the Jewish people of their responsibility to the poor and the vulnerable.”²² The prophets were people of context and cognizant of community crises around them. Jacobs provides an in-depth overview of the Jewish understanding of social justice and contemporary applications to the twenty-first century Jewish synagogue and Christian church.

In *Moral Issues and Christian Response*, edited by Paul T. and Dale A. Johnson, the authors provide a clear understanding of the challenges of moral choice and the character of individual decision and discourse. This offers the opportunity to engage in moral choices that address matters of social concern within the Christian community of faith. Individual and congregational moral judgment is possible with a proper presentation of facts and theological understandings.²³ A similar argument is made through the writings of author Thomas W. Ogletree whose book, *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics*, includes an extensive essay on the treatise of the relation of the Bible to Christian Ethics. He establishes a common ground between biblical insight and contemporary ethical inquiry.²⁴

²² Jill Jacobs, *There Shall Be No Needy: Pursuing Social Justice through Jewish Law & Tradition* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2010), 44.

²³ Paul T. Jersild and Dale A. Johnson, eds., *Moral Issues and Christian Response*. 5th ed. (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College).

²⁴ Thomas W. Ogletree, *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

Christopher D. Stanley in *The Hebrew Bible: A Comparative Approach* provides an extensive overview of scholarship that digs into the comparative religion of the ancient near east and ancient Israel. The examination provides supportive evidence that the concept of social justice was not a new movement in Hebrew Scripture, but an integral part of the covenantal laws in the Hebrew laws.²⁵ This presentation gave a detailed analysis of the social, political, and economic background analysis for this project.

Injustice Made Legal: Deuteronomic Law and the Plight of Widows, Strangers, and Orphans in Ancient Israel by Harold V. Bennett examines the Deuteronomic Code through the socio-scientific lens of critical theory of law. Bennett posits that the laws were actually detrimental to this subgroup within the Israelite community. In so doing, Bennett offers a comprehensive examination of viewpoints concerning the legal codes found in the Hebrew Bible for this project.²⁶

Critical understanding of the Hebrew Bible against literary and socio-cultural practices of the pre-exilic Hebrew Prophets is examined in the works of Hemchand Gossai's *Justice, Righteousness and the Social Critique of the Eighth-Century Prophets*²⁷ and Norman K. Gottwald's *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social*

²⁵ Christopher D. Stanley, *The Hebrew Bible: A Comparative Approach* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010).

²⁶ Harold V. Bennett, *Injustice Made Legal: Deuteronomic Law and the Plight of Widows, Strangers, and Orphans in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002).

²⁷ Hemchand Gossai, *Justice, Righteousness and the Social Critique of the Eighth-Century Prophets* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 1993).

*Hermeneutics*²⁸ and *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction*.²⁹ These resources give additional thoughts on how to explore the sociological approaches of the Old and New Testaments. The writings advance a political and social hermeneutic.

Joseph A. Grassi, in *Informing the Future: Social Justice in the New Testament*,³⁰ informed the positions of practical reformation toward social justice through the lens and framework of the Deuteronomic Law and the Hebrew Prophets. However, Grassi falls short of offering ways for preaching such reformation.

Contemporary Application of the Prophetic Voice

To bring the conversation to a contemporary application in Black church preaching, numerous authors were examined who have written on the necessity of a prophetic voice of preaching and praxis of biblical social justice in the twenty-first century church.

Blow the Trumpet in Zion: Global Vision and Action for the Twenty-First Century Black Church by Iva E. Carruthers, Frederick Haynes III, and Jeremiah Wright Jr., advocates for a Black theology, preaching, and evangelism in support of community and

²⁸ Norman K. Gottwald, *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983).

²⁹ Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985).

³⁰ Joseph A. Grassi, *Informing the Future: Social Justice in the New Testament* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2003).

economic development. The book supports a new paradigm to leadership for church life and works.³¹

Preaching Justice: the Ethical Vocation of Word and Sacrament Ministry by James M. Childs, Jr. provided a comprehensive viewpoint regarding the ethical and evangelical reasons for the church to commit itself to proclamation and praxis of biblical justice within all arenas of society.³² Of major import is the prophetic proclamation as supported by Scripture. H. Beecher Hicks Jr. posits in his book, *Prophetic Business*, the necessity of the preaching moment to reclaim its prophetic voice and vision of ministry.³³

Contending for Justice: Ideologies and Theologies of Social Justice in the Old Testament by Walter J. Houston examines prophetic and Hebrew law texts and appropriates insights from social science studies. Houston identifies biblical texts with persuasive arguments for Christianity's focus upon moral and ethical equality.³⁴

The book *Black Sacred Rhetoric: A Commentary for African-American Preaching* by Gregory M. Howard provides a useful commentary to undergird the importance of prophetic preaching in the Black church. Howard argues that effective Black preaching, when properly constructed, gives proper congregational context to the external praxis of

³¹ Iva E. Carruthers, Frederick Haynes, and Jeremiah Wright, *Blow the Trumpet in Zion: Global Vision and Action for the Twenty-First Century Black Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005).

³² James M. Childs, *Preaching Justice: The Ethical Vocation of Word and Sacrament Ministry* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000).

³³ H. Beecher Hicks, *Prophetic Business* (Chicago, IL: Urban Ministries, 2002).

³⁴ Walter J. Houston, *Contending for Justice: Ideologies and Theologies of Social Justice in the Old Testament* (New York, NY: T&T Clark Publishing, 2006).

social justice.³⁵ Marvin A. McMickle, in *Where Have All The Prophets Gone? Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America* continues the conversation and argues for the resurgence and urgency to embrace the classic witness and word of the Hebrew Prophets in contemporary preaching and teaching.³⁶

Several additional works address the concern for an increased prophetic proclamation stance in the Black church. In *Black Spirituality and Black Consciousness: Soul Force, Culture and Freedom in the African-American Experience*, Carlyle Fielding Stewart III posits that African-American spirituality plays a vital role in the formation, practice, preservation, and resistance to outside influence or degradation of Black freedom and spiritual freedom.³⁷ Stewart creates a model that informs and strengthens Black cultural and spiritual life. In so doing, Black Americans embrace Black spirituality and culture as essentials for personal identity and community. Stewart continues this train of thought in his book *The Empowerment Church: Speaking A New Language for Church Growth*. In this work he posits that the purpose of the church is to bring people to salvation in Christ and positively and permanently, change lives for the good of the community. This work asserts the position that many North American churches neglect to

³⁵ Gregory M. Howard, *Black Sacred Rhetoric: A Commentary for African-American Preaching* (Charleston, SC: Booksurge, 2008).

³⁶ Marvin A. Mickles, *Where Have All the Prophets Gone? Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2006), 86.

³⁷ Carlyle Fielding Stewart, *Black Spirituality*.

empower its people with the capacity to be recipients and catalysts of positive social justice.³⁸

The NIV Application Commentary: Hosea, Amos, Micah, From Biblical text ... to Contemporary Life by Gary V. Smith takes the contemporary context back to the world of the original author and audience. Smith eases the difficult task of bringing Hebrew Bible texts from their original meaning to its contemporary significance.³⁹

Robert B. Coote's book, *Amos among the Prophets: Composition and Theology*, provides an academic analysis of the socio-political structures and prophetic collections of the prophet Amos.⁴⁰

Shalom M. Paul, author of the Commentary *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*, offers a thorough analysis of the Amos text, with an emphasis on Ancient Near East parallels and backgrounds. This commentary provides key exegetical and historical analysis and its application in the biblical foundation work of the project.⁴¹

In *The Eighth-Century Prophets: Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah* by Bernhard W. Anderson, author offers a commentary on the eighth-century prophets that demonstrate

³⁸ Carlyle Fielding Stewart, *The Empowerment Church: Speaking A New Language for Church Growth* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001).

³⁹ Gary V. Smith, *The NIV Application Commentary: Hosea, Amos, Micah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001).

⁴⁰ Robert B. Coote, *Amos among the Prophets: Composition and Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1981).

⁴¹ Shalom M. Paul and Frank Moore Cross, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991).

new perspectives for contemporary prophetic preaching and praxis for social justice. This work provided major themes of biblical foundational work around the judgment, justice, and mercy of God.⁴² The book aided in stressing the proper theological dilemmas the eighth-century Hebrew prophets faced and responded to. Gerhard von Rad, in *The Message of the Prophets*, also provided presentations of the prophetic writings against the background of the Hebrew prophets' time and their relevance to the modern recipient.⁴³ Carroll R. and M. Daniel provided a thorough, scholarly research regarding the social vision of the Hebrew prophets in their book *Amos—The Prophet and His Oracles: Research on the Book of Amos*.⁴⁴

The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible: A Theological Introduction, by J. David Pleins, addresses a significant look into the life, culture, and social customs of the various time periods of the Hebrew Bible writings and their relationship to worship of Yahweh. This work provided clarity concerning viewpoints of oppression from Old and New Testament perspectives.⁴⁵ Furthermore, David L. Peterson, in his book *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction*, includes a systematic and comprehensive introduction to an appropriate definition of prophet, biblical prophetic literature, its development within the

⁴² Bernhard W. Anderson, *The Eighth Century Prophets: Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1978).

⁴³ Gerhard von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets* (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1967).

⁴⁴ R. Carroll and M. Daniel, *Amos—The Prophet and His Oracles: Research on the Book of Amos* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

⁴⁵ J. David Pleins, *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible: A Theological Introduction*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

Hebrew Bible, and form of criticisms. The book demythologizes the prophet as a main function of foretelling.⁴⁶

Interpreting the Prophets, edited by James Luther Mays and Paul J. Achtemeier, includes works of comparative studies concerning the prophets and their functions in Israelite society.⁴⁷ These writings offered opportunities to present critical research and modern religious use of the prophetic understanding as it pertains to Hebrew themes of social justice.

The Substance of Things Hoped For: A Memoir of African-American Faith by Dr. Samuel DeWitt Proctor promotes an appreciation for the life and ministry of Dr. Proctor, whose life, teachings, and ministry continue to endear and influence Christians toward a ministry of relevant social justice. Proctor uses everyday moments in his life to accent the necessity of the Christian church to remain diligent and reactive to the injustices of society upon Black America.⁴⁸ Real societal change often comes at the point of systemic change and the church is well equipped to be an effective tool in seeking such a change. This is true because the people in the church are just as often the victims of the social order as the community around them to which they are called to minister.

Philip Francis Esler, in *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology*, provides relevant sociological and

⁴⁶ David L. Peterson, *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

⁴⁷ James Luther Mays and Paul J. Achtemeier, eds., *Interpreting the Prophets* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987).

⁴⁸ Samuel DeWitt Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For: A Memoir of African-American Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1995).

anthropological theology and texts from the Luke-Acts writings for this project. These texts support a response to social and political pressures upon the Christian community for whom the texts originated. Esler supports Jesus' socio-economic justice agenda through the book.⁴⁹ An additional book by Richard J. Cassidy, Richard, *Jesus, Politics, and Society: A Study of Luke's Gospel*, provided a thorough reading of the Gospel of Luke in the light of new patterns of social relationships to the vulnerable in Roman-ruled Palestine. Cassidy's analysis proved useful in the examination of Luke 20 in support of Jesus' social agenda.⁵⁰

Obery M Hendricks, Jr., in *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted*, enable one to see Jesus' teaching in a revolutionary political light. This allowed for greater connection to the Hebrew prophetic tradition of railing against social and economic injustice. Obery suggests several political strategies employed to present Jesus in a countercultural light focused on a social theology that affirms one's spiritual engagement and belief system.⁵¹

Jesus and the Disinherited by Howard Thurman articulates a Liberation Theology that gives voice to the voiceless, empowers the politically and economically impotent, and introduces a God who liberates and gives hope and power to the unjustly oppressed

⁴⁹ Philip Francis Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁵⁰ Richard J. Cassidy, *Jesus, Politics, and Society: A Study of Luke's Gospel* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978).

⁵¹ Obery M Hendricks, *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted* (New York, NY: Three Leaves Press, 2006).

and vulnerable of society. Thurman offers deep commentary on the teaching of Jesus and the spiritual encouragement offered to those in the crucible of poverty, the disinherited and the dispossessed. He invites the reader to learn to live Christian love as a radical force of liberation.⁵²

In *Christ and Culture*, H. Richard Niebuhr delineates the foundational tension of proper relationship between Christianity and society. There is struggle between socio-ethical concerns for action and disregard of social order in favor of spiritual purity and focus. Niebuhr suggests moving toward a Jesus who calls humanity into unity through socio-political concerns.⁵³ In so doing, Jesus is no longer a passive Rabbi but a radical Messiah in message and ministry.

The journal article “Black Churches and HIV/AIDS: Factors Influencing Congregations’ Responsiveness to Social Issues” by Brad R. Fulton analyzes current methodologies exploring the centrality of Black churches within African-American communities. Externally engaged Black churches are more likely to engage in social justice issues confronting its surrounding communities.⁵⁴ This train of thought continues in the journal article “To Whom Much Has Been Given...Religious Capital and Community Voluntarism Among Churchgoing Protestants” by Jerry Z. Park and Christian Smith. The authors contend church activity has an empowering nature on a religious community life that positively influences volunteerism in the local community.

⁵² Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1976).

⁵³ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2001).

⁵⁴ Brad R. Fulton, “Black Churches and HIV/AIDS: Factors Influencing Congregations’ Responsiveness to Social Issues,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50, no. 3 (September 2011): 617-630.

The article supports the idea that religious community matters a great deal and empowers the local congregation to assist their neighbors.⁵⁵

Saul D. Alinsky, in his short book *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals*, presents pragmatic considerations for organizing and demanding social change within the local context. It is a book concerned with establishing mass organizing power structures for use in effecting changes toward equality, justice, peace, education, and employment.⁵⁶ The book presents the ideological stance that if the church has the power to act (on biblical and theological grounds), it will often move toward more righteous decisions and actions.

Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap by Frederick C. Tiffany and Sharon H. Ringe served as a guide for exegetical studies on passages of scripture. The book helped discover key questions concerning biblical texts and interpretation, as informed by historical, social, and cultural realities.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Jerry Z. Park and Christian Smith, “‘To Whom Much Has Been Given...’: Religious Capital and Community Voluntarism among Churchgoing Protestants.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 39, no. 1 (March 2000): 272-286.

⁵⁶ Saul D. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1989).

⁵⁷ Frederick C. Tiffany and Sharon H. Ringe, *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996).

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

An individual Christian functioning alone may contribute something to the momentary eradication of a single act of injustice. However, achieving systemic transformation with a persistent manifestation of justice and righteousness in the everyday reality of humanity involves a communal response of the individual Christian and entire church congregation. Crucial to this response is the development of a Christian pedagogy that grounds the Christian response in the prophetic, political, and social dimensions of Christian Scripture and ministry as practical theology. In particular, the words and actions of the eighth-century Hebrew prophets and of Jesus the Christ offer the contemporary Christian congregation a theology and praxis for social justice. Justice is defined as having to do with fairness, impartial treatment, or commitment to what is right in the sight of God. It requires that each person envision himself or herself not as a separate participant, but rather as a component of a whole. It involves the deliberate integration of moral and ethical interpretation of God's justice and practical application of the interpretation.

The tradition of the Black church of linking justice to social justice as an ethic of religious practice and faith with political and social change is an aspect of Liberation Theology. Liberation Theology asserts that God is the God of the politically, socially, and economically oppressed and marginalized within society. It is the physical manifestation

of biblical salvation and truth among humanity where all experience divine love, freedom, justice, and peace. The importance lies in how to effectively develop and execute a pedagogy that educates and promotes possibilities for the faith community to wrestle with the issues of social justice in order to live out a Christian faith that positively influences social, political, and economic realities that affirm the will of God. It is a theology born from scriptural themes of prophetic calls for a return to justice and the life and ministry of Jesus Christ among the marginalized and poor in context.

The Black church in America, since its early days of existence, empowers itself to continue as a Christian faith community that practices social justice as a communal process to influence Christian values, hearts, and practice for just social transformations within the larger society. It is this Christian hermeneutic, or theory of interpretation, and the vision of who we are and must become that is the foundation of the Black church's reliance upon Old and New Testament writings of the Christian bible; that is the Judeo-Christian proclamation. It is necessary for local church leadership, both pastors and laity, to hear, engage, and accept the prophetic appeal of the Christian Bible and link it to the prophetic call of practical application or praxis. The church continues to wrestle with the question of how to provoke practical manifestations of its prophetic core and witness toward social justice. This is the essence of a practical theology. Practical theology evaluates the norms and habits, or practices, of the church and its members and the reasoning for why certain norms or habits exist within a congregation.

David Polk, Associate Professor of pastoral ministry at Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, and theologian, reasons that practical theology emerges at the

convergence of theological reflection and ecclesial action.¹ The desired outcome of prophetic proclamation is not simply to forespeak or foresee an apocalyptic future of certainty. Rather it is the awakening of the pastor and laity (local church) relationship with God (prophetic) as a commissioned mouthpiece and body to communicate and represent God's justice in the world. It is to express the "acts and words of God, seen, heard, and interpreted by the prophets...."²

There is a need to formulate congregational minds and hearts to engage in practical ministry to effectively address and confront political, social, and economic injustices within the local community. This is true praxis. Practical ministry allows the local congregation to give attention to the marginalized, abused, and poor within and beyond its walls. It is ministry engaged at the intersection of relationship between humanity and the Divine.

The object of this ministry focus (project) is an attempt to understand and address the function and import of social justice and righteousness in the proclamation and Christian Education of First Baptist Church's practical theology and praxis in Manassas and Prince William County, Virginia. Christian faith and its theological underpinnings play a part in perceptions and actions of social transformation within a local Christian congregation. The eighth-century Hebrew prophets and revelation of God, through the words and actions of Jesus the Christ, inform and affect our Christian attitudes and actions concerning social systems. A review of biblical scriptures and social justice

¹ Polk, 375.

² C. Thomas Owen and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*. 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 33.

literature suggests that a Christian liberation pedagogy highlighting the prophetic, political, and social dimensions of ministry and integrating it within the Christian education (proclamation and group study) has the potential to engender a motivational response to participation in local church social justice efforts. A greater participation in faith-based community organizing efforts for social justice, such as V.O.I.C.E., is possible within First Baptist Church.

There still exists within the Christian church the debate and question of whether a church can or should address social issues and injustices in a formal and public way.³ Some churches have been passionate and sensitive to issues of social justice in their community and the nation at large, Others have relinquished the role of speaking out on matters of social justice to other organizations, or simply limiting the church's role to the making of negative pronouncements.

The dominate wisdom within mainline Protestant churches is a focus almost exclusively upon salvific evangelism. Such an approach is shortsighted. Opportunities for prophetic witness as a gathered community become lost and de-valued in a one-dimensional view of the local church's call to spiritual salvation alone. Prophetic proclamation and Christian Education must motivate individuals and congregations to move beyond spirit-filled worship and evangelism that feeds the soul. It must engender an equally needed spirit-filled work that meets the political, economic, and social needs of justice in the daily lives of those in community.

³ Jersild and Johnson, 2.

It is not an either/or proposition to ponder, nor is it a matter of priority of one over the other. In 2 Corinthians 5:17-20, Paul authorizes the church to establish itself as an ambassador of Christ Jesus in this world. As such, the church is a conduit of God's justice, righteousness, love, and redemption. The local church must establish itself with the glory and greatness of God. This happens in times of worship and praise. Conversely, yet equally crucial, it is disingenuous for the church to worship and praise God, while failing or refusing to work individually and congregationally to establish social justice within its local context in collaboration with and love for the marginalized, poor, and oppressed.

This project challenges a wisdom that promotes personal and congregational piety that disconnects from personal and congregational responsibility toward social justice. It posits that an intentional revision in the local church, in particular the Black church, to a practical theology for social justice among clergy and laity leadership in Christian Education and proclamation (Practical Theology and Liberation Theology) will revive the social justice ethic as a main part of Christian praxis and foundation. Such a renewal can engender greater participation in church social justice programs and faith-based community organizing initiatives within local congregations.

This study will present a model of ministry that conceptualizes the theory and practice of social justice in the pedagogical and proclamation practices of First Baptist Church. The words and actions of the eighth-century Hebrew prophets and Jesus the Christ in the Gospel of Luke will constitute the prime scriptural support. In so doing, the study will demonstrate a direct influence on current membership involvement and

support the development of ministry leaders and their personal participation in faith-based community organizing for social transformation. The focus lies in the confidence that the social critique of the classical eighth-century Hebrew prophets and the revolutionary politics of Jesus the Christ support the premise that the Word of God makes the case for the place of social justice in the church's ethics, teaching, proclamation, and practices.

Authentic prophetic preaching draws the Christian faith community into God's reality. However, it is a reality which disturbs and disrupts the comfort and contentment with conventional wisdom and shallow existence.⁴ Christian authors Sunderland and Shelp proposed a few years ago in their book, *The Pastor as Prophet*, the question of the nexus between prophetic and pastoral ministry must integrate into the life and ministry of each congregation. The prophetic ministry of pastors is not just an option; it is required as a vital characteristic of their role and identity.⁵ Such a prophetic pedagogy will weave itself tightly into the fabric of Christian preaching and teaching. It is ill advised to limit matters of social justice to a consigned corner of ministry within a Christian congregation. To limit considerations of social and economic justice to a specific ministry within the church body, increases its chance of becoming limited in participants, scope and marginalized in power.⁶

⁴ J. Philip Wogaman, *Speaking the Truth in Love: Prophetic Preaching to a Broken World* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 3-4.

⁵ Earl E. Shelp and Ronald H. Sunderland, "Prophetic Ministry: An Introduction," in *The Pastor as Prophet*, eds. Earl E. Shelp and Ronald H. Sunderland (New York, NY: The Pilgrim Press, 1985), 7.

⁶ Childs, x.

The classical eighth-century prophets, after allowance for social, contextual, and textual distortion, offer relevant moments of social justice as an inspiring resource for contemporary Christian proclamation and praxis within First Baptist Church. This understanding will develop largely from a critical examination of the ideologies and theologies of social justice in selected writings in the Biblical canon. The project will entail the development of a sermon series (proclamation) and a synchronized Sunday school curriculum (four Sunday school lessons) to aid in advancing the commitment of First Baptist Church toward an informed consciousness and active agent for social justice within Prince William County and beyond (praxis).

There must be a growing awareness among Christians that the purpose of the church is not only to be a praying and worshipping community, but also to embrace the call as a “moral community as well whose mission embraces a careful evaluation of the moral life of society”.⁷ The objective is manifestation of a greater understanding of social justice, ministry dialogue, and innovative application within First Baptist Church’s actions in Prince William County, Manassas, and northern Virginia.

The current perception of social-economic-political affairs (social system) within Manassas and Prince William County, Virginia, is wanting of comprehensive pragmatic concern and action on behalf of the marginalized segments within its border. There exists a need to rediscover the strong voice of the Christian church to unfold glimpses of God’s agenda of social justice as illustrated by the words and actions of the Hebrew prophet Amos in Amos 5:21-24 and Jesus the Christ in Luke 20:45-47.

⁷ Jersild, 3.

The Word of God gives authority to the local church to speak and act out on matters of social justice in an informed and passionate manner. The Word of God has much to say on the subject of social justice. The Christian church exists, in part, to transmit and actuate God's agenda of social justice as delineated throughout the Biblical texts. In the past, First Baptist Church has attempted to address social justice through limited ministerial responsibility within the local body or eschew the topic altogether. Social justice, as a matter of program participation, became the onus of a particular ministry within the congregation. Mark Labberton, professor of preaching at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California suggests a historical shift in the purpose of the church from an exclusive priestly perspective to the inclusion of a prophetic function of social justice. Professor Labberton argues that wide-ranging changes in today's culture and generational priorities allow for broader engagement in issues of injustice. In the Black church, it is a reawakening of the value of social justice within the prophetic praxis of the church's purpose.

Social Media and greater public access to cyberspace networks has garnered faster and a more extensive exchange of information and ideas regarding human inequality, marginalization, and abuse of the poor locally and worldwide.⁸ Although this may be true, the issue of social justice, according to Scripture, has always been an integral part of the ethics of the Christian church. Some pastors and churches give a sense of spiritualizing the meaning of "justice" and "righteousness" and intentionally or

⁸ Labberton, 20-24.

unintentionally negate the practical responsibility and concrete practice of social justice in the ‘here and now’ in relationship within the church and local community.

However, it has historically been the position of the Black church to acknowledge the import and mandate of social justice as an integral part of the church’s call to action.

Scholar, author, and writing Editor Dale A. Johnson, in the book “*Moral Issues & Christian Response*” concludes:

Church leadership always speaks to the church as well as for the church, helping to educate and sensitize the membership concerning the implications of Christian belief for a particular social issue. The responsibility of church leadership is to know and understand the factual data and then to draw out the implications of the Christian orientation to human life as they would apply to the issue. There may well be room for disagreement ... but at least the Christian community is being stimulated to think about its convictions in relation to an important issue in the society.⁹

It is the obligation of pastor and laity to crystallize a clear biblical mandate for social justice within the local Black church.

When social justice becomes the import of a single ministry within the local congregation it limits the dialogue and discourse concerning social justice and, ultimately, forces a limited scope on such an important part of the Christian mission. Limitations of resources and commitment of any one ministry restricts a church’s potential outcomes and practices and leads to a de facto marginalization of matters concerning social justice.¹⁰ Despite resource limitations, First Baptist Church remains

⁹ Jersild, 3.

¹⁰ Childs, x.

obligated to God to engage in social justice within and beyond the walls of its congregation. The congregation is ripe to amplify its engagement in matters of social justice that confirms the nexus between humanity and God within its local context and beyond. The proclamation that emanates from the Christian pulpit, biblical studies, and practical ministry must act as a prophetic agent of God. Prophetic preaching would do well to engage the listener to embrace the prophetic appeal to link proclamation and praxis. It is the church's proclamation and educational vision that determines and distinguishes what is important to a local congregation and its surrounding community. To be Christian is to be empowered and to empower others.¹¹

First Baptist Church is not without fertile ground upon which to yield a greater harvest of spiritual, cultural, and social transformation. There are a broad range of programs and organizations in which First Baptist Church actively engages. The church is a participant in a broad-based citizen's organization known as V.O.I.C.E which is comprised of nearly fifty faith and non-profit organizations dedicated to making change on social justice issues such as affordable housing, dental care for low-income adults, and systematic immigration reform regarding matters of process and administration. In addition, First Baptist Church offers free weekly classroom space to a local non-profit organization known as BEACON for adult literacy. BEACON offers tuition-free classes for English as a second language, GED preparation, citizenship, basic literacy, and quarterly life-skills workshops. Internally, First Baptist Church administers an emergency assistance ministry that offers emergency financial assistance for qualified housing, food,

¹¹ Stewart, *Empowerment Church*, 27.

transportation, and medical needs within the congregation and local community. First Baptist Church has also created a feeding program (Barnabas Bread Basket) that offers free hot meals to the general public on Thursday afternoons, regardless of perceived need. Barnabas Bread Basket also administers a once-a-month dinner on the last Thursday of each month.

In addition to funding Barnabas Bread Basket, First Baptist Church provides major financial and pastoral support for feeding programs in Guyana, South America (Sophia Presbyterian Church) and Monrovia, Liberia, West Africa (Restoration Baptist Ministries Community Nutritional Program). With the Guyana, South America feeding program, families receive a monthly allotment of staples (rice, corn, beans, flour) to assist families in this impoverish community. While First Baptist Church provides monies for the purchase of food, local pastors and church leadership handle the monthly administration and distribution. As a result of the Liberian feeding program, hundreds of children receive weekly meals to supplement an insufficient diet provided by struggling households living in abject poverty and insufficient governmental assistance.

The voices and practical actions of pastor and people at First Baptist Church must be prophetic if they are to be authentic. Prophetic means the task in word and deed to awaken the Christian and congregation to its role and responsibility as a herald and proponent of the justice and righteousness agenda of the realm of God. Pastor, scholar, professor of homiletics at Ashland University, and author Dr. Marvin A. McMickle argues for the necessary connection between authenticity and prophetic action in the church. Dr. McMickle, in his book “Where Have All the Prophets Gone?” concludes:

Prophetic preaching is designed to motivate people to move beyond lifting up holy hands and begin to extend helping hands to those Jesus describes in Matthew 25 as “the least of these.” It is not a matter of one over the other, nor is it a matter of one being more important than the other. Rather, it is a matter of seeing that one is really impossible without the other. We cannot serve God in this world of evil and corruption as we should unless we have a sense of the glory and greatness of God that is perfected in times of praise and worship. Similarly, we cannot sing “What a mighty God we serve” and then fail or refuse to work to establish a more humane and just society in the name of that mighty God.¹²

A prophetic proclamation and praxis of clergy and laity within First Baptist Church offers a more complete and full witness of the Christian scriptures and will of God to world. As worship and praise are not ends in themselves to the plan of the church, authenticity requires attention to the church’s role of producing practical manifestations of its witness toward social justice. This is possible only if the whole congregation (clergy and laity) spiritually and practically engages in comprehending the biblical writings and narratives that support the goal of social justice. It becomes an intentional learning process. It is a systematic process of theological reflection of biblical texts concerning social justice. The goal is to reestablish the importance for a permanent revision of self-possibilities in Christ. This facilitates the personal translation of one’s awareness of the need for concrete participation and action that benefits the individual, congregation, and the local and global community.¹³

The clergy and laity leadership of First Baptist Church must struggle with questions and answers of how to stir thought and action, preaching and practical ministry into the whole of the congregation. The church validates its prophetic witness toward

¹² McMickle, 85.

¹³ Stewart, *Empowerment Church*, 27.

God's social justice, as supported by Scripture, by raising its internal value of social justice within the practical mission and communal and internal works of social justice within the individual First Baptist Church congregant and the entire congregation. There is an opportunity to expand the Christian witness into the surrounding communities by increasing membership participation in social justice endeavors such as V.O.I.C.E.

James Childs poses numerous questions for the faithful. What discoveries abound about God's social justice when pulpit and pew reclaim its prophetic voice? How must one execute the integration of matters of social justice into the message and actions of people? These are all relevant questions. Crucial to First Baptist Church's prophetic understanding will be determining how does one teach faithfulness to biblical social justice within First Baptist Church? Is such a quest even necessary or even practically possible?¹⁴

A larger segment of First Baptist Church must struggle to understand its divine role of social consciousness to a rapidly expanding Prince William County and Manassas community and civic authorities. It is deemed a struggle because it involves revealing and prioritizing the teachings and commandments before the church body in various Christian education settings and challenging them to live out those principles and practices in their daily lives. This rarely occurs without a struggle. The message of the prophets is a message that calls God's people back to our original purpose as the people of God. Yet the Apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 7:15-23, we often must struggle to do the will of God. Few congregants are actively engaged in social justice endeavors (relative to the

¹⁴ Childs, xi.

church's more than one thousand person membership). General pastor and laity dialogue within the congregation on matters of biblical justification for social justice reveals a lack of clear understanding on the biblical support of obligation toward social justice to the marginalized (beyond evangelistic proselytizing and non-political ministry endeavors like feeding and clothing programs). When requested by clergy and laity leadership to actively participate beyond attendance at large actions, nearly the entire congregation fails to offer up themselves to active partnership and participation. The clergy of First Baptist Church, in the last ten years, rarely preaches the message of the eighth-century Hebrew prophets. Being located just outside Washington, D.C., the church sits in the shadows of recent socio-political and public debates concerning healthcare and other forms of assistance to the poor and marginalized in this nation.

There is a cacophony of moral vision for the local community these last few years, especially with the establishment of the faith-based social justice organization V.O.I.C.E. First Baptist Church is a member within the V.O.I.C.E. organization. Public discourse concerning careful attention to the plight of the marginalized often leads to dispute concerning the breadth and definition of human relationship as neighbors and fellow citizens. Through V.O.I.C.E.'s organizing efforts, dialogue with county leadership often clarifies that the plight of the oppressed in Prince William County communities is becoming more dismissive. Since 2008, clergy and laity leadership within Manassas and Prince William County congregations that participate in V.O.I.C.E. have repeatedly approached County leadership for greater governmental financial and political support of

greater affordable housing and dental care for low-income residents. The response is often dismissive to the requesting clergy and laity leadership.

In 2009, during a normal county board meeting, the Prince William County Board of Supervisors attempted to remove all language referencing affordable housing from the county's comprehensive planning document, a document that sets the vision for the next twenty-five years of county planning, expansion, and priority. The V.O.I.C.E. organization was able to obtain the document in advance of a final vote and was present to object to the wholesale deletion of language that offers governmental support and planning for affordable housing. Due to the efforts of V.O.I.C.E., the affordable housing language remained in the comprehensive planning document for Prince William County.

A misunderstanding or lack of understanding of the prophetic function of the church body in its faith obligation to act as an agent of social justice can be detrimental to the local congregation and community. It becomes detrimental to the local congregation in that it may limit the full potential to champion and challenge social, political, and economic injustices of government, business, and faith communities upon the poor, marginalized, and oppressed in its community. It disencumbers the individual Christian and congregation's biblical obligation toward social justice. This lowers the internal conscious value of social justice within the individual. Once the individual is isolated from the obligation, its natural movement is to injure the larger Christian community obligation toward social justice. This must change! Community Organizer Saul Alinsky concludes:

The basic requirement for the understanding of the politics of change is to recognize the world as it is....It is a world not of angels but of angles, where men speak of moral principles but act on power principles; a world where we are always moral and our enemies always immoral; a world where “reconciliation: means that when one side gets the power and the other side get reconciled to it, then we have reconciliation.”¹⁵

According to the 2010 Census, Prince William County, Virginia has 402,002 residents.¹⁶ The County government recently released an annual report in which Prince William County was rated as one of the nation’s premier communities.¹⁷ Although the report identifies the county as such, the ratings are confirmed by third parties. The report attributes the accolades to dedication to government leadership in pursuing job growth, community development, and sound financial management. Although Prince William county government leaders have made strides in improving conditions within the county, the unemployment rate remains unusually high among the marginalized and poor within the county. In poorer economic pockets of the county, educational test scores continue to lag and incidences of youth and gang violence remain high. Although more affordable housing units are needed in the region, the number of affordable housing units on the market, or being developed remain static at best or shrinking in comparison to the growing need within the county.¹⁸

¹⁵ Alinsky, 12-13.

¹⁶ Prince William County Government. *Prince William County Current and Proposed Election Districts: 2010 Demographic Characteristics*. Document Library, accessed May 5, 2011, <http://www.pwcgov/doclibrary/PDF/13986.pdf>.

¹⁷ Prince William County Government. “Prince William County Rated as One of Nation’s Premier Communities,” in *Prince William County Annual Report* (Prince William County, VA: Office of Executive Management), accessed May 5, 2011, <http://www.pwcgov.org/doclibrary/PDF/13560.pdf-2011-01-31>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Homelessness is pervasive and increasing in the Prince William County and Manassas area. Although benevolent giving has risen within the faith and philanthropic community, the local homeless shelters and food banks have seen an exponential rise in need and those in need.¹⁹ Furthermore, there is a clear under-representation of African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and lower-income groups within the power structures that guide economic, educational, political, and community policies. Although Prince William County is a minority-majority population, no persons of color have ever served on the governing Board of Supervisors. Attempts to address social justice concerns with the Prince William County governing Board of Supervisors has yielded little impact or redress of concerns.

The response of governmental leadership is the usual and unpersuasive excuse of shrinking budgets. The bond-rating agency of the County garners greater attention than the lack of bread and healthcare for the very citizens it presumes to care and govern. There is negligible effectual discourse for compassionate care for the marginalized.

Efforts to engage governmental and business sectors of local society in effectual dialogue for substantive and long-term change in policy and practice are largely unproductive. Cooperative engagement by leaders and laity within the faith community has been paltry at best. One could conclude that many local clergy, by their practices, believe the purpose of clergy and the church is to remain largely priestly in form and function. Clergy focus primarily on the importance of individual godly living, worship, and events that address the spiritual needs of its congregants. The priestly function is a

¹⁹ Prince William County Government, Human Services Strategic Plan Task Force, accessed December 30, 2011, <http://www.pwcgov.org/doclibrary/PDF/009286.pdf>.

vital function of the Christian church, yet it must not neglect its prophetic function as an agent of change for biblical justice. This retains the high value for social justice as a core value within the practices of the congregation. If a greater segment of the faith community, in particular First Baptist Church, can be encouraged to engage in matters of social justice, and if the value of social justice, supported by Christian scriptures, within the consciousness of the congregation can be raised, First Baptist Church, Prince William County, and Manassas will be the better for it. In 2004, researcher Sandra Barnes published an article in the journal *Social Problems* entitled “Priestly and Prophetic Influences on Black Church Social Services” that echoes these sentiments on priestly and prophetic influence. “A prophetic function suggests that, just as a religious conversion should alter one’s personal life, such a change may be questioned if not accompanied by the desire and willingness to mobilize collectively to affect societal improvements or serve as an agent of resistance and protest.”²⁰

Former Professor of Christian Ethics at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., and currently Senior Minister at Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C., J. Philip Wogaman says in his book *Speaking the Truth in Love* that, “[t]o be prophetic is not necessarily to be adversarial, or even controversial.”²¹ The word *prophet*, in its Greek form, refers to a person who speaks on behalf of another. Furthermore, in the Hebrew tradition, a prophet is one who speaks for God. The prophet has a call and commission by which to grasp and deliver the message God intends.

²⁰ Barnes, *Priestly and Prophetic Influences*, 202-221.

²¹ Wogaman, 3.

Through a prophet, the people obtain a divine view into the reality of God, a reality that shapes and directs Christian existence.

Biblical Foundation

Social and economic injustice is a major problem within the United States. Throughout this nation, families are struggling to find decent and affordable housing and healthcare. Parents are working at jobs that do not provide livable wages and often find they are unable to satisfy their families' basic needs for food, clothing, healthcare, and shelter. Karen Olson, President of Family Promise, states that "the root causes of poverty persist: jobs that don't pay a living wage; housing that is inadequate, unsafe, or priced out of reach; and the lack of quality healthcare, childcare, and education."²² The 2011 protests on Wall Street and across the nation offer glaring examples of discontent and disgust with an unjust system. As the privileged offer polemics on the benefits and bonuses of a quality education, those living in poor communities are struggling to learn in overcrowded classrooms with outdated facilities and textbooks.

In light of these intolerable realities, what has been the recent response of the twenty-first century Christian church and, in particular, prophetic pastoral ministry? All too often, the church remains soft spoken or mute on matters of social justice in their respective communities and within the United States as a whole. Effective addressing of

²² Karen Olson, "Preface," in *Just Preaching: Prophetic Voices for Economic Justice*, ed. Andre' Resner (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2003), xvii.

these ills requires a pastoral ministry that is prophetic in nature, instruction, and expression.

Christian ministry correlates to its prophetic and pastoral functions.

Unfortunately, these functions have become two independent movements with neither informing the other.²³ Prophecy, as defined by the *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, means "to speak for or on behalf of someone."²⁴ Pastoral ministry more readily defines the administrative, care, counseling, and programmatic aspects of Christian ministry among clergy and laity. In order to be true to their mission and effective in their mandate, twenty-first century pastors need to bring clarity, through scriptural support, to the relationship between Christian faith and social justice. Pastoral functions of clergy and laity focus on the spiritual dimensions of religious life, while prophetic functions of clergy and laity address the need for equality and fairness in economic and political empowerment.²⁵ This should facilitate a greater integration and empowerment in addressing and creating transformational change against socio-economic injustices in local communities. The words of the prophets and their prophetic literature throughout the Christian Bible are replete with suggestiveness and social teaching for the twenty-first century.

In the eighth century B.C.E., the Hebrew prophets Amos, Micah, Hosea, and Isaiah all proclaimed God's discontent with those that would disconnect their personal

²³ Shelp and Sunderland, 8.

²⁴ David L. Petersen, "Prophet, Prophecy," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, vol. 4 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press), 622.

²⁵ Barnes, *Priestly and Prophetic Influences*, 202-221.

piety from any personal responsibility for giving voice and efforts to transform socio-economic injustices to a more just social order.

Seek the Lord and live, or he will sweep through the house of Joseph like a fire; it will devour and Bethel will have no one to quench it. You who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground ... I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.

Amos 5:6-7; 21-24

No matter how much you pray, I won't listen. You are too violent. Wash yourselves clean! I am disgusted with your filthy deeds. Stop doing wrong and learn to live right. See that justice is done. Defend widows and orphans and help those in need.

Isaiah 1:15-17 Contemporary English Version

The Lord God has told us what is right and what he demands: "See that justice is done, let mercy be your first concern, and humbly obey your God." ... You store up stolen treasures and use dishonest scales. But I, the Lord, will punish you for cheating with weights and with measures. You rich people are violent, and everyone tells lies.

Micah 6:8, 10-12 Contemporary English Version

But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always. The merchant uses dishonest scales and loves to defraud. Ephraim boasts, "I am very rich; I have become wealthy. With all my wealth they will not find in me any iniquity or sin."

Hosea 12:6-8

For the Hebrew Bible, pastor, author, Hebrew scholar and associate professor of Hebrew Bible, Dr. Jerome Clayton Ross declares function as the principal measure of

existence and relationship as the primary foundation of that existence.²⁶ In order to undertake the task of confronting social justice concerns, the pastor must engage in a ministry that is both prophetic and pastoral in nature and expression. It must be a prophetic ministry that informs the purpose and lives of its community of faith, who find themselves full of concern for the world.

One of the functions of the Christian church is to act as a moral agent of God in the execution and proclamation of God's justice and righteousness in the world. The church is to operate as the working power of God in the world. Therefore, the faith of Christianity and the command of Scripture are the driving forces behind opposition against socio-political oppression in America. The presence of social oppression and injustice in the local community or world provokes a Christian faith response for justice. The Scriptures teach us that the significance of action undertaken by Christians for social justice fulfills the act of affirming God's love of humanity and the desire for the common good in community. It is therefore allowable to define justice as the pursuit and adherence to acts and systems that affirm God's righteousness and love of humanity and the desire for the good of community. Jesus offers this lesson to an expert in the Law of

²⁶Ross, 155.

Moses desiring to know how to have eternal life.

An expert in the Law of Moses stood up and asked Jesus a question to see what he would say. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to have eternal life?” Jesus answered, “What is written in the Scriptures? How do you understand them?” The man replied, “The Scriptures say, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind.’ They also say, ‘Love your neighbors as much as you love yourself.’” Jesus said, “You have given the right answer. If you do this, you will have eternal life.”

Luke 10:25-28 Contemporary English Version

In the New Testament, the Greek word [*dikaiosynē*] (justice) is often translated as righteousness rather than justice. Social justice is, therefore, proper relationship to others and God.

If this is true, is social justice one of the moral virtues imperative for Christians to practice?²⁷ The scriptures from the eighth-century prophets and Jesus the Christ support an affirmative response to the question. People with moral sensitivity recognize that these acts of injustice are inherently unfair because they place certain groups at economic or social disadvantage. Such activity, like predatory lending practices, lack of access to affordable healthcare, inadequate affordable housing, biased judicial sentencing standards, racial discriminatory hiring practices, primary education disparities, etc., prevent people from having equal access to basic conditions for life.²⁸ This is also known as distributive or procedural justice. Biblical treatments of justice often challenge inequitable distributions of goods (social and economic) on behalf of the poor or other

²⁷ Haughey, 1.

²⁸ Ibid.

disadvantaged persons. God becomes the defender who will hear the cry of the lowly and oppressed and rescue them (Luke 1:47-55).²⁹

The word injustice often implies illegal acts that deprive people of their rights. However, many unjust acts in the present age are legal since the present structure of society allows them to exist.³⁰ This type of injustice, such as payday lending practices, paying unlivable wages, denial of voting rights, and lack of available jobs in poor communities is alive and thriving in the United States. These are categorized as systemic or institutional injustices. God becomes the judge and prosecutor of such oppressive systems (Amos 5:7-15). The structure of American society favors the wealthy and places the poor at a disadvantage. Some of the rich hold political, economic, or social power and then fail to protect individual and fundamental rights prescribed by law and community ethical standards. This results in the establishment of unfair control over structures of society that can be, and are, manipulated to benefit the rich, and inevitably, make life more difficult for the poor and powerless. For example, the rich often exert undue influence on the way tax money is spent. The poor pay as much sales tax on items bought as the wealthy. Yet, the rich have the power to insure that this tax is spent on items that benefit their agenda, rather than on programs that benefit the underserved.³¹

In the United States, social injustice is often the result of racial or ethnic discrimination. The treatment of African Americans and other people of color are

²⁹ Pheme Perkins, "Justice, NT," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press), 475.

³⁰ Malchow, xi.

³¹ Ibid.

unequal to whites in many pockets of American society. The economically poor seem systemically trapped in perpetual poverty and remain disadvantaged. Some wealthy and powerful businesses display patterns, practices, and propensities that allow unjust conditions to continue and become the norm for their business practices thereby influencing accepted industry practices. Author and pastor Timothy Keller has commented in his book *Generous Justice* that businesses should not squeeze every penny of profit out of their businesses for themselves while charging the highest possible fees and prices to customers and paying the lowest possible wages to workers. Such practices fall under the guise of God's injustice as proclaimed through the eighth-century Hebrew prophet Amos (Amos 4:1).

Pastors who wish to empower their congregations towards greater engagement in matters of social and economic justice in the twenty-first century would do well to prioritize prophetic preaching and teaching. They would identify with points of reference from both the Old and New Testaments of the Christian canon. However, reading the Bible is not enough. Pastors must seek to hear the witness of the Bible and search for ways to interpret the timeless truths for their generation.

The *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* defines justice as having to do with impartial arbitration, equitable treatment, or adherence to an ideal of what is right.³² Justice focuses on the highest values of a right relationship to God and to others. In relation to specific social, economic, and matters of faith, justice (the Hebrew word is

³² Harold V. Bennett, "Justice, OT," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, vol. 3 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press), 476.

mishpat) means ordinance or regulation. God's ordinances and regulations often exemplify God's desire to care for and maintain a just relationship with God's people Israel and forgiving them of their sins (Exodus 15:25; Leviticus 5:10; Numbers 15:24; and Deuteronomy 6:1). Justice concerns non-biased judicial decisions and impartiality about an issue in a legal proceeding.³³ The New Testament uses the word in the ethical sense of character and conduct. Biblical concerns of justice challenge inequitable distributions of goods and demands greater government investment in healthcare.³⁴

You could argue that the problem in our world is not that people do not know they should share with others. The real problem lies in a lack of biblical understanding and biblical motivation to do the just and righteous thing as a Christian. Liberation Theologian, pastor, scholar, and author J. Deotis Roberts agrees with this assumption. Dr. Roberts declares that it is through the church's mission and ministry that God's purpose and plan occur on earth. There is a need to comprehend the full relationship of Christ and the Church, in relation to its ministry mandate.³⁵

While his ministry included the "least of these," he also challenged the "greatest of these" whenever humans were being treated as nonpersons. The ministry of Jesus was personal, social, and public—it was holistic in the most comprehensive sense. Another way of stating this is that the ministry of Jesus was priestly, prophetic, and public.³⁶

³³ Bennett, "Justice, OT," 476.

³⁴ Ibid., 475.

³⁵ Roberts, 1.

³⁶ Ibid., 2.

It is the call of all within the corpus of the Church to confront the prophetic witness of the Bible and reassess our own views about oppression and political exploitation for real practice in the real world. The authentic witness of the Gospel toward social justice releases the efforts and energies of the entire faith community to transform the world in which they live. The acceptance of God's word concerning social justice, if it is sincere, must include an obedient submission to what the word demands.³⁷

Social justice is neither a new concept nor a new movement of God. We identify the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, collectively, as the Torah.³⁸ Torah is a Hebrew word meaning instruction, teaching and law.³⁹ It includes a host of laws that regulate the everyday lives and social relationships of the people of Israel. These laws are organized in concentrated passages (Exodus 21:1-23:9; Leviticus 19:1-37; Numbers 35:1-36:13; Deuteronomy 19:1-22:30).⁴⁰ The nation compiled the laws as a part of the covenant relationship.

During the emergence of the Israelite community, establishment of its monarchy, and through the early centuries of the new Christian faith, political centralization and economic intensification became normative. The Hebrew Bible's ethical undertones of justice and injustice flow throughout the Old and New Testaments. These undercurrents are the ground water sources that feed the social roots of the prophetic voices and

³⁷ John C Haughey, 32.

³⁸ These are universally accepted as the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. They are also referred to as the *Pentateuch*.

³⁹ James W. Watts, "Torah," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfield, vol. 5 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press), 629.

⁴⁰ Stanley, 319.

traditions on matters of social justice. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses provides a vision of economic and social justice for the Jewish people. Moses' exhortation in Deuteronomy 15 looks negatively upon corruption by the wealthy and powerful within Hebrew society. Moses exhorts the Israelites to condemn corruption by the wealthy and powerful and to look kindly upon the poor. While discussing the year of cancelling debts, Moses declares in Deuteronomy 15:7-8 that if there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the lands that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your brother. Rather be openhanded and freely lend him whatever he needs. The text is a reminder to persons of power that those in positions of power and wealth must possess a component of living out one's faith that will establish or maintain a just society and relationship with God.⁴¹ The idea of human dignity flows from the Hebrew biblical word *achikha* (your brother). By attempting to distance ourselves from artificial and false barriers of human dignity, Rabbi Jill Jacobs declares in her book, *There Shall Be No Needy*, that "seeing each poor person as our sibling cuts through any attempts to separate ourselves from him or her."⁴²

In fact, Deuteronomy 15 offers up a programmatic vision of economic justice with a destination that severely lessens the poverty within Hebrew society. It shrinks the economic gap between the wealthy and the poor. Jewish congregants engaged in social action or social justice often describe their work using the terms *tikkun olam* (fixing the

⁴¹ Stanley, 10-11.

⁴² Jacobs, 12.

world), *tzedek* (justice), and “prophetic Judaism.”⁴³ These real world actions incorporate direct and indirect actions (service projects as well as political action and philanthropic practices).

The biblical prophets have long been favorites of Jewish social justice initiatives, and with good reason: the prophets remind the Jewish people of their responsibility to the poor and the vulnerable. Amos’s call to “let justice roll down like water; righteousness like a mighty stream” (Amos 5:24) has become a rallying cry of both Jewish and Christian justice movements.⁴⁴

Yet, Harold Bennett, assistant professor of religion at Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia, and author of *Injustice Made Legal*, argues for another view within the legal codes. Bennett posits that critical analysis of the legal codes within the Hebrew Bible deserves greater attention due to injustices toward the poor found within the codes themselves. The wording of Deuteronomy 16:19 to not pervert justice or show partiality is characteristic of prohibitions in the Torah. The text offers a legal injunction against showing favoritism or taking bribes. To render a biased judicial decision is to offer preferential treatment to the one offering the bribe (inferred as the rich in the biblical text). It is the intentional perpetration of injustice against the poor. They (the poor) seek proper redress of grievances by the courts system of Israel.⁴⁵ In some of the legal injunctions of the Hebrew Bible (particularly within the Deuteronomic Code), certain

⁴³ Jacobs, 21-24.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 44.

⁴⁵ Bennett, *Injustice Made Legal*, 100.

laws are written to advantage ruling groups within the Israelite community.⁴⁶ For example, Bennett argues that certain regulations concerning the location of distribution of benefits for the *almana*, *ger*, and *yatom* (widows, strangers, and orphans) made access to such resources by the socially and economically vulnerable problematic (Deuteronomy 14:22-29).⁴⁷ The requirement to travel to the site for the presentation and consumption was problematic. Poorer farmers and herders did not possess the resources to make such an annual pilgrimage. The official cites were not in proximity to villages or cities. Yet the Code offered no exceptions.⁴⁸

Religious scholar and Professor of Religion Hemchand Gossai argues another view both somewhat different and somewhat similar to Jacobs and Bennett. The Torah's role and function is defined in the proclamation of the Hebrew prophets. The proclamation of the eighth-century Hebrew prophets offer insights into the final reading and understanding of the Torah, as they speak God's pronouncements and judgments upon God's people. Often, the actual text of the Torah is not explicitly mentioned in the prophetic proclamation, but scholars agree that the prophet's audience would have been familiar with the transgressions of the Torah being inferred by the prophet's words (Amos 4:1-5). Gossai argues against reading the eighth-century Hebrew prophets as being concerned with the social legislation of the Torah; whether it was for just or unjust intentions is irrelevant. The real question concerns the purpose of the prophetic

⁴⁶ Bennett, *Injustice Made Legal*, 171-176.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 81-85.

proclamation. It is here that Gossai agrees somewhat with both Jacobs and Bennett. The role and function of the eighth-century Hebrew prophets was not to reform Israel, but to offer God's judgment and reason for the guilty verdict. Calling the eighth-century Hebrew prophets reformers would be in error. "Reformation by its nature involves elements both of the old and the new....[I]t is apparent that the eighth-century prophets were not inclined in this specific direction....[T]here is no indication that the prophets were called to reform."⁴⁹

Gossai argues the prophets were not reformers, traditionalists, revolutionaries, Yahwists, or ethicists. Although there is disagreement as to whether the prophets were reformers, it is clear they shared some common elements in their messages—righteousness and justice. It is the shared direction of the message and messenger to focus upon the intrinsic ties to the relationship of Yahweh and people. "The prophet remains fundamentally a messenger who proclaims and interprets Yahweh's word in the light of the situation in which he finds himself."⁵⁰ The prophets' critique of social injustice binds them together. It is the obvious corruption of those authorized with the responsibility to care and defend the poor and disenfranchised that garner the focus of the words of the prophet. Therefore, righteousness and justice work in tandem toward the divine call of social justice.

The eighth-century Hebrew prophet Amos makes the connection between social injustices and the hypocritical temple activity of the powerful and wealthy. Those

⁴⁹ Gossai, 222-226.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 222-241.

involved in temple activity are the very same persons responsible for the injustices against the poor. Their false validation through temple worship will not overcome their “means of self-indulgence.”⁵¹ The prophet’s critiques cover aspects of social, economic and religious life that leads to a broken relationship with the divine. The presence of righteousness and justice serve as reminders of the elements God declares necessary for life. Biblical scholar James Ward states, one could not worship God without an active commitment to the welfare of others.⁵²

Now, the Christian church defines its message and mission through its core framing and practices of discipleship: preaching and teaching. We consign other matters to the agenda of particular ministries within the church, but as H. Beecher Hicks, Jr. has said, the power of “pastoral ministry should be measured by the paradigms set forth in the Word of God and in the ministry of Jesus Christ.”⁵³

The Christian church is empowered when the prophetic Word of God is able to course through the hearts and minds of the entire congregation. This occurs most often during Sunday preaching and teaching times. When God’s justice and our call to seek it are missing from the message, the church does itself a disservice. The more we understand the concern for social and economic justice and its connection to the promises of God in Jesus the Christ, the more it will be present in the preachers’ proclamation and prominent in the congregational mission of every member. Regardless of a church’s size,

⁵¹ Gossai, 244.

⁵² Ibid., 258-260.

⁵³ Hicks, 14.

demographics, resources, or location, all Christian congregations have the mission of making justice a lived priority of the congregation. However, how do we incorporate social and economic justice concerns into the basic Christian message?⁵⁴ The bible is full of biblical texts with a persuasive argument for contemporary Christianity's focus upon social and economic justice. It has something to say on the subject of social and economic justice that is meaningful and worth hearing in the twenty-first century. In the twentieth century, Christians have often engaged in fights against social injustice through the inspiring words of the prophets and teachings of Jesus.⁵⁵ The judgments and rejection rendered by God upon temple worship in Bethel by the wealthy who approach the altars under false pretenses of adherence to God's laws of justice (Amos 3:13-15) remind us of the consequences of refusing to adhere to God's call for the Christian church to make social justice a lived priority.

It is not clear today whether the Church seems convinced that moral and ethical equality are essential to social justice. Occasionally, culture will show an awareness of the issue by acknowledging an imbalance of justice. However, more often than not those with power to affect positive change ignore the call for social justice. The church must believe that God has an intention of justice for society. It must turn for support to the Bible, with its passionate words against oppression and in favor of care for the oppressed, powerless, and poor.⁵⁶ Therefore, it is the purpose of prophetic preacher to encourage the

⁵⁴ Childs, x.

⁵⁵ Houston, 1-4.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 2.

local congregation to work out its soul salvation, individually and corporately. It is a social and economic justice for everyday life, community, mission, and ministry. They must believe this, if it is to remain relevant and resistant to systems of social and economic injustice in and outside the congregation.⁵⁷ This might seem to say that the Hebrew Bible holds little value in informing the modern church. Yet, there is continual dialogue between the past and present word of God. What often hinders dialogue with the Hebrew Bible is not the different culture and time difference; it is our ethical position apart from the social oppressed and poor. Nevertheless, the cultural distance of the Hebrew Bible has never been a problem. Walter Brueggemann said the radical faith of ancient Israel as voiced through the prophets, continues in our own time as a particular, concrete, and essential claim about power, money, goods, access.⁵⁸

The Hebrew Bible is the Word of God spoken with a purpose that benefits beyond its initial writers and hearers. God has commissioned the Hebrew prophets to be the social critic of society's moral standards in the Hebrew Bible. Central to the ideology of justice in the Hebrew Bible, is that God acts to establish or preserve justice and righteousness through the Hebrew prophets.⁵⁹

The prophetic witness concerning the social witness of God in the Bible covers hundreds of years. This writing will examine two of those witnesses (the prophet Amos and Jesus the Christ as presented in the Gospel of Luke). The issue of social justice is a

⁵⁷ Houston, 3.

⁵⁸ Walter Brueggemann, "Ancient Utterance and Contemporary Hearing," in *Just Preaching: Prophetic Voices for Economic Justice*, ed. Andre' Resner (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press) 67.

⁵⁹ Houston, 15.

theme in most parts of the Hebrew Bible. However, the issue speaks clearly through the Hebrew prophet Amos of the eighth-century B.C.E.

The Prophet Amos

Amos is the focus of the eighth-century prophets due to the almost unanimous agreement that the book of Amos is the earliest of the prophetic books. For this reason, the book garners significant review by modern scholars as an important turning point in the history of the religion of Israel. The book garners attention for its power of language and concern for the oppressed.⁶⁰

The prophet Amos provides an excellent example of how to communicate God's judgment of behavior that God deems unjust. Amos called the nation back to its ancient religious traditions in the Torah and introduced new ideas that called for a transformation of the way his audience thought about God and their relationship to him.⁶¹ Amos displays an acute awareness of how the economic priorities of the few were replacing the ethical values rooted in the faith community.⁶²

The nine chapters of the book of Amos present an array of judgment speeches, visions, doxologies, admonitions, laments, a brief narrative, and concluding promises of

⁶⁰ Donald E. Gowan, "The Book of Amos: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflection, in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 7 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press), 339.

⁶¹ Smith, *NIV Commentary*, 204.

⁶² Coote, *Amos among the Prophets*.

salvation.⁶³ Looking at the book of Amos as a whole, it is dominated by three series of announcements: the oracles against the nations in 1:3-2:16, the five warning judgments in 4:6-12, and the series of visions in chapters seven through nine. Much of the book of Amos consists of judgment oracles against Israel, primarily for the oppression of the poor. In the oracles, Amos delivers a clear message that, after due warning, God will destroy the kingdom of Israel for its sins, primarily for social injustice.⁶⁴ The future seems grim for eighth-century B.C.E. Israel. Yet, Amos declares that oppression of the weak and poor by the powerful is under the judgment of God. Amos attacks the patriotic, pious, and callous response among the elite classes to the oppression of the marginalized during the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II. The wealthy, with governmental and judicial collusion, were systematically confiscating the land of the poor, widows, and oppressed in order to appease their lavish and unjust style of living.⁶⁵ Although the criticisms offered by Amos act as a paradigm for all eighth-century B.C.E. prophets,⁶⁶ Amos' encounter with God is the driving force behind his proclamations.⁶⁷

Amos did not proclaim political revolution on behalf of the poor, although it would be a fair assumption that the poor appreciated Amos' criticisms of the injustices

⁶³ Gottwald, 353.

⁶⁴ Houston, *Contending for Justice*, 58.

⁶⁵ Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 356.

⁶⁶ Gossai, *Justice, Righteousness and the Social Critique*, 258.

⁶⁷ Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible*, 357.

railed against them.⁶⁸ God tells the prophet to announce the threat of exile and explain it. Explaining it means, "...the Sovereign Lord has spoken—who can but prophesy?" (Amos 3:8) Identified as the elect of God in Scripture, Israel must exemplify the blessings and obedience of God to other nations (Amos 3:2). Failure to fulfill the covenant relationship with God invites God's judgment of rejection as the favored child. God admits it is Israel who will end (Amos 8:2), but their failure means something new will have to be done.⁶⁹

This is the opening message of the prophet during the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam. Before Amos became a prophet, he was a shepherd and one who cared for sycamore figs. The word shepherd (*nqd*) in this text refers to one who manages shepherds. It was argued that Amos probably had what we would call today a middle-class job, so he was not a poor peasant.⁷⁰ Amos is issuing a call to Israel to recognize that its demise is due to a failure to do justice. Amos grieved over the lack of social relationships within the nation governed by the covenant and laws of Israel. As a nation surrounded by Near East nations and their religious practices, Israel ceased from following the principle of justice and care for the weak to a much more selfish and unjust approach.⁷¹ Although Amos never explicitly quotes from the law, it assumed the violations have to do with God's law as delineated in Deuteronomy 15. It is a crime,

⁶⁸ Smith, *The NIV Commentary*, 208.

⁶⁹ Gowan, 345-347.

⁷⁰ Smith, *The NIV Commentary*, 209.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 208.

Amos implies, and as with any crime, there is usually a victim.⁷² In Amos 4, the prophet reveals the essence of God's indictment, judgment and demand to Israel. Amos condemns many of the wealthy of Northern Israel who oppress the poor and crush the needy. The women of Bashan have placed excessive and incessant demands upon their husbands to provide more luxuries in which to indulge their festivities. However, their economic requests were impoverishing the poor. Amos describes such unrighteous women as "cows of Bashan. Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy" (Amos 4:1). It is a repetitive nature of oppressive and exploitive actions against the poor of the land.⁷³ The prophet offers a satirical invitation for the people regarding the rituals and customs of worship. He takes the mandate to worship and uses it as an indictment against the people in order to demonstrate the sins of the Israelites. The elements of a covenantal relationship with God and the community of God became a spectacle of self-satisfaction.⁷⁴

Amos singles out two of the major ritual sites in northern Israel, Bethel, and Gilgal. The people received invitations to come to their favorite worship centers in order to sin and to transgress even more. Having raised the arrogance of the people's patriotic sign, by recalling their chosen status by God, Amos takes the same train of thought and reverses the fortunes of the nation by reminding the people of Israel that privileged status

⁷² Houston, 61.

⁷³ Shalom M. Paul, *A Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 128-129.

⁷⁴ Gossai, 259.

requires accountability before God.⁷⁵ Amos sarcastically derides the unjust wealthy, who are oppressing the poor and needy, to continue in their false display of piety, for he knows their true purpose is self-satisfaction and not true worship.⁷⁶ The prophet is not berating the wealthy for practicing their customary rituals; nor is the prophet accusing them of offering illegitimate sacrifices or of being involved in idol worship. Amos is declaring that the more zealous they are in performing the rituals, the more they will continue to offend and transgress against their neighbor, and more importantly, against God.

Amos conveys that the essence of God's demand is not exclusively in attendance of religious rituals, but in the moral and ethical spheres of life. Whereas Samuel demanded the "primacy of obedience" over sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22), Amos stresses the "primacy of morality."⁷⁷ Worship and ritual are means, whereas justice and righteousness are ends. God requires devotion to social and economic justice more than simple devotions. God seeks right and righteousness more than rites and rituals.

Amos issues a lament to the house of Israel in Amos 5. The prophet denounces the worship centers of Bethel and Gilgal. This speaks against the sacrifices offered in Amos 4:

⁷⁵ Smith, *The NIV Commentary*, 211.

⁷⁶ Gossai, 259.

⁷⁷ Paul, 138-139.

Go to Bethel and sin; go to Gilgal and sin yet more. Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three years. Burn leavened bread as a thank offering and brag about your freewill offerings—boast about them, you Israelites, for this is what you love to do,” declares the Sovereign Lord.

Amos 4:4-5

Amos implies the people are not truly seeking or worshiping God at the temples; therefore, God will not accept their sacrifices or music of worship.⁷⁸ God beckons Israel to seek God and thereby live, even in the face of certain exile. *Exile* is simply another word for death. Amos is calling for the destruction of Israel and its sanctuaries. Nevertheless, Amos 5:4-6 presents a ray of hope. There has been no issuance of a final death certificate. Amos exhorts the people to seek the Lord and live.⁷⁹ It is a message of moral demand in the use of two words: justice and righteousness.

Seek the Lord and live, or he will sweep through the house of Joseph like a fire; it will devour and Bethel will have no one to quench it. You who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground...I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.

Amos 5:6-7; 21-24

The literal Hebrew translation of Amos 5:7 reads “those who turn justice to wormwood and cast down righteousness to earth.”⁸⁰ It introduces two key words: justice and righteousness. They occur together here and in Amos 5:24 and 6:12. Their usage

⁷⁸ Smith, *The NIV Commentary*, 314.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 161.

⁸⁰ Gowan, 388.

infers a call for social justice. It is a call to eliminate oppression and exploitation. Righteousness concerns God's right standards of life for Israel. Justice is the realization of those standards.⁸¹ It is a matter of debate as to whether the prophet, in Amos 5:6-7, is offering genuine hope to a condemned nation or simply encouraging the small remnant that will remain after exile.⁸² It may simply function as an explanation for God's judgment or encouragement for the remnant to remain faithful to God and God's righteousness.

Through the message of the prophet, God delineates the proper divine-human relationship. The proper divine-human relationship shows up in a correct human-to-human relationship. Amos 5:24 says, "let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" As a shepherd herder, Amos draws upon the imagery of the open country and likens his demand for never-failing justice and righteousness to a riverbed that never fails.⁸³

The prophet's words consistently allude to religious values. The exploitative mechanisms that permit a rich high-class standard of living, as opposed to the expanding poor standard of living for the marginalized, constituted a rejection of the faith community's obligations and devotion to God's ethics of justice. The dilemma of social and economic injustice is more than an economic problem. It is a religious problem of maintaining a practiced commitment to the standards of ethics as given by God for the

⁸¹ Gowan, 388.

⁸² Smith, *The NIV Commentary*, 314.

⁸³ Paul, 193.

community of God (privately and publicly). The powerful indictments of the oppressors in Amos continue to inspire those concerned for the rights of the poor and oppressed.

The presence of righteousness and justice in Amos 5:24 serve as a clear reminder of the elements which are necessary for life, seen alongside the emptiness of the cultic rituals. One could not worship God truly without an active commitment to the welfare of others. It is precisely this failure which is being criticized in Amos 5:21-24.⁸⁴

The passages in Amos 5 read as a denunciation of abuses. Such abuses by God's people continue to this present day. The oppressed readers of Amos can and do find in the book a voice to express their own experience of oppression. The conduct of those denounced in Amos is outrageous on many counts. The consequence of their lack of social justice is real and unavoidable in the time of Amos and today. The concern for social justice triumphs with God, then and now.⁸⁵

Prophetic preaching that incorporates the moral compass of God will undoubtedly encourage the church to act in accordance with the Bible's aims of social justice. Legal and institutional changes are not enough in and of themselves. Such changes collaborate with personal and communal commitments to act. In reality, Amos was, if anything, less of a revolutionary and more of a reformer back to God's commitment to social and economic justice. It is the call back to a sense of community with justice and righteousness at its core.

⁸⁴ Gossai, 261.

⁸⁵ Houston, 73.

The ideal of social justice that the text projects and the key values from which it draws from tradition are significant. The prophetic call of Amos is not a progress call and belief toward a future dynamic and moral imperative of God, but a conservative one. Social justice is a rescuing from the distortions and abuses of modernity and contemporary dynamics of social abuse and power in and outside the Christian faith.⁸⁶

The Christian community and its modern day prophetic proclamations of social and economic justice go back to the Hebrew Bible. Although we have a greater understanding of Amos and relevancy of the Old Testament for our understanding of involvement in matter of social justice, there is more to learn from the biblical witnesses. That is why we must also examine what Jesus the Christ himself reveals to the church. In particular, we turn our attention to the Gospel writer of Luke.

Jesus the Christ

In Luke 19:45-48 Jesus is described arriving in the Jerusalem temple with a notice of judgment and indignation. However, it is not a moment of unrestraint rage, as is often interpreted here. It is a significant interpretative moment of prophetic connection. It is suggestive of the type of condemnations that point towards the prophets.

Jesus' last recorded presence in the Jerusalem temple occurs when he is just twelve years of age. As geographical locations, there is social significance to Jerusalem and its temple. Jerusalem is the city of destiny for Jesus and the temple is the institution

⁸⁶ Houston, 200.

for the emergence of Christianity.⁸⁷ Jesus comes to Jerusalem, a city known for rejecting kings and killing prophets. It is also the place the prophets warned that will be destroyed for not recognizing the time of God's visitation of redemptive work through Jesus the Christ (Luke 19:28-44). It is in the temple in Luke 19:45-48, that Jesus begins his response or prophetic critique of the temple. Jesus seeks to recover the temple for its legitimate use: revelatory teaching and prayer.⁸⁸

As a "house of prayer," the temple functions to promote God's righteousness and justice. However, Jesus offers a stinging criticism to the people that the temple worshippers have perverted the justice of God by utilizing the place of justice as "a den of robbers" (Luke 19:46). Jesus borrows the comment from the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 7:5-11). There, the use of the words in verse 4 is condemned: "Do not trust in deceptive words and say, 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!'" (Jeremiah 7:4).

Like in Amos 5, the people commit unjust acts of oppression of the poor and attempt to conceal their unjust acts through heightened worship. Jesus uncovers their deception. The plan to hide behind temple worship will not cover their sins of economic oppression and violation of the socio-economic covenant to care for one another. Following Jesus' prophetic cleansing and reclamation of the temple, Jesus teaches the true significance of the temple as a place of "good news to the poor ... freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free" (Luke 4:18b).

⁸⁷ Esler, 131.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 132-133.

Jesus offers a response to oppression and injustice in the Gospel of Luke. In particular, in Luke 20:45-47, Jesus continues his teaching in the Temple, but with a sharp and public condemnation against the teachers of the law. Jesus offers a prophetic word of criticism to the worshippers at the temple when he reclaims the temple for its place of covenant obedience to God. Jesus drives out the money changers in an act of prophetic illustration to reestablish the values of justice that God desires.

While all the people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, “Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely”.

Luke 20: 45-47

In this text, Jesus offers a response to oppression and injustice. Again, it is suggestive of the type of condemnations pointed at by the prophets. Jesus, in speaking to his disciples, issues a warning against the hypocrisy of the teachers of the law. Those who desire to follow him must safeguard against the temptation to imitate the scribes.⁸⁹ The scribes are known for their outward flare and appearance of piety and justice, but in reality, they are full of social injustices against the vulnerable and weak within society. They act with injustice and exploit the poor.⁹⁰

In so doing, Jesus offers a list of criticisms of the scribes. Their main socio-economic abuse occurs in their habit of devouring widows’ houses (Luke 20:47). Jesus

⁸⁹ R. Alan Culpepper, “The Gospel of Luke: Introduction, Commentary and Reflection,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 9 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press), 392.

⁹⁰ Clinton E. Arnold, ed., *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), vol. 1, 476.

shows concern for the legal rights of widows and the abuse of power against such vulnerable women. Jesus offers condemning words toward the scribes because of their desire for public recognition, exploitation of socio-economically vulnerable widows, and a pretense of piety while praying.⁹¹ The exploitation may refer to the abuse of guardianship of widows' estates or an abuse of a widow's hospitality. Widows are the most vulnerable and helpless of society.

Jesus condemns the scribes for their excessive desire for public recognition, exploitation of widows and pretense of piety while praying publicly.⁹² Jesus' teachings in Luke 20 introduce new patterns of social relationships toward the poor and oppressed.

In addition to his support for a style of acting and living based upon humility and service, Luke's Jesus also criticizes certain practices and patterns as inconsistent with such values. In one instance, Jesus criticizes some of the Pharisees for wanting "the best seat in the synagogue and salutations in the market places."⁹³

It is less likely that Jesus is condemning the privileges afforded the scribes, and more likely, he is condemning the love and abuse of privilege by the scribes. Rather than seeking to reverence God in all that they do—"to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8)—the scribes seek the public recognition of others, the best seats in the synagogues, and preferential treatment and undue honor at

⁹¹ Arnold, 393.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Cassidy, 39.

dinners and banquets, while eating up widows' homes. The words carried accusations of extortion or deceit and inferences of socio-economic injustices.

The social relationships garner Jesus' condemnation or praise depending on one's attitude and interactions with the vulnerable and poor. Luke 20 places these social positions of Jesus within the context of Jesus' deep belief in God and his frequent attention to God's purposes and the nature of God's kingdom.⁹⁴

The closing statement of Jesus in Luke 20:47 should leave no doubt as to the consequences of injustices against the poor and vulnerable of society; there will be severe punishment. Jesus exposes the dangers in the quest of virtue: (a) doing good out of ulterior motives, and (b) doing wrong with the power or privilege accorded to those appointed to do good.⁹⁵ The role and purpose of prophetic preaching and teaching is not to speak against the commands and laws of God, but to appeal to their hearers to uphold their traditions of justice and righteousness and not forget its judgment.

With points of reference from the Hebrew prophet Amos (Amos 5:21-24) and Christ himself as presented in Luke's Gospel (Luke 20:45-47), the priority for social and economic justice is manifest throughout the Christian Bible. Therefore, it is imperative for pastors to empower their congregations towards greater engagement in matters of social and economic justice in the twenty-first century.

⁹⁴ Cassidy, 48.

⁹⁵ Culpepper, Gospel of Luke, 394.

Theological Foundation

The objective of this ministerial focus is to gain insight and understanding of the Hebrew Bible concerns with social justice. The message of the prophets had a focus on the subject of justice. The Hebrew Bible held persuasive arguments on matters of social justice that were meaningful to the Israelite nation in its particular day and time.

The Israelite practice of prophetic preaching about social justice brings to bear divine judgment and/or grace into the social life of Israel. The eighth-century prophets of Israel held a view that looked toward God's judgment of tomorrow for purposes of highlighting the immediacy and today's need for change and understanding. Bernhard Anderson would say the task of the messenger of God (prophet) is to make the eschatological alarm of God's outlook effective in the contemporary conditions and circumstances of life, so that the people of God might recover their identity and their vocation and gain a transition from death to life in the present.⁹⁶

Commonalities in the prophetic messages include their roots in the basic sacral traditions of the pre-monarchial period. It is the political view of the future as guided by Yahweh. It is a message of movement toward salvation in the very act of the proclamation of judgment. The prophets are dependent on ancient traditions in which they interpret and present in a new and more radical fashion.⁹⁷

The eighth-century prophet Amos was a man of substance and reputation, unlike the prophet Isaiah, Amos seems to have no older traditions on which he depended for the

⁹⁶ Anderson, 22.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 10-14.

contents of his visions.⁹⁸ Gerhard posits that Amos is concerned with the changes and tensions in Israel's political world. Israel now has to deal directly with Yahweh in judgment. Amos reveals a society whose social life is bi-furcated. There is a property-owning economically self-sufficient upper class that, while showing zeal in religious ceremony, shows great deficiency in the administration of social justice within Israel (Amos 5:11; 8:6).

The second, and larger, tier of Israelite society are those abused by the excesses, bribery, and dishonesty perpetrated by the upper class in matters of rights and business. It is believed that Amos' guideposts of prophetic speech are grounded in the Hebrew Bible Book of the Covenant (Exodus 20:22—23:19).⁹⁹ The chaotic social structures of Israelite life grab Amos' attention. The prophet finds a deficiency in the quality of heart and mind among the upper classes of Israelite society in relationship with their fellow and poorer Israelites. This allows for disconnect in the outlook of life together as a people of Yahweh. Amos objects to an attitude that rejects relationship and fellowship of suffering among God's people.¹⁰⁰

Although the people looked for a 'Day of Yahweh' in which the Lord would rescue Israel and judge the nations, they never assumed the 'Day of Yahweh' pertained to their own demise. Gerhard remarked:

⁹⁸ von Rad, 102.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 106-107.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 108.

Time and Time again, with one calamity after another, famine, drought, failure of the harvest, failure in war, and epidemics, Yahweh kept knocking at their door, but they paid no heed (Amos 4:6ff). Now, however, this time of indirect warning is over. Israel must now hold herself in readiness to meet her God in person.¹⁰¹

The Author's Context

The understanding of any text is dependent upon the context, experiences, and standpoint of the reader of that text. Being born the youngest of six boys into a two-parent household, enabled the author to read and react to the parental approval and admonition of his older brothers. Through trial and error, the lessons of obedience, community involvement, academic excellence, and athletic pursuits were learned. His parents successfully raised their family in a five-room row home in the community of Turner Station.

Turner Station has a rich history with a legacy of achievement. Author Louis Diggs, in *From the Meadows to the Point*, recounts the community's origins (around the late 1800s) in an area called the "Meadows." Turner Station's birth coincided with the birth of the modern day Bethlehem Steel Mill and Sparrows Point shipyard.¹⁰² African-Americans began to migrate to the Meadow area late in the nineteenth century.

Interviews with residents born in Turner Station in the early 1900s verify the early beginnings of this African-American enclave.¹⁰³ This community would educate and develop its own barbers and beauty shops, bankers and businesses, doctors and dentists,

¹⁰¹ Von Rad, 108.

¹⁰² Louis Diggs, "From the Meadows to the Point: The History of Turner Station," March 30, 2010, <http://www.louisdiggs.com/meadows/home.html> (accessed March 30, 2010).

¹⁰³ Ibid.

teachers and preachers, entertainers and athletes. It would experience a time of prosperity, achievement, and family values. These would be facts of achievement not to be ignored. The stamp of great expectations rooted itself in the community during this period of upward mobility and self-sufficiency. Turner Station was a “vibrant, self-sustaining community of over 10,000 residents. Its citizens contributed to the county, state, and nation in a variety of ways.”¹⁰⁴ Yet, growing into his own self-awareness, identity, and calling of God, brought awareness of the injustices found within the economic and political power structures of society and, in particular, the communities oppressed and/or poor. The mantle of senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Manassas, Virginia, in 2002, brought opportunities to develop relationships and cooperative visions of adjusting local economic and political practices that place a higher value on neighbors and communities than on money and economic power. There developed a concern when those economic and political means do not serve the common citizen’s ends.

With the conviction that God has purpose for society; there began a search for support from the biblical texts of the eighth-century prophets, with its words against oppression and in favor of care for the widow, orphan, and stranger (the poor).¹⁰⁵ No Christian apologetic on social justice is complete without supportive reference to the Hebrew prophets and prophecies. The Word of God, after allowing for the distortions of ancient society, offers an enduring message of social justice that is foundational to the mission and ministry of the Christian congregation.

¹⁰⁴ Diggs, 8.

¹⁰⁵ Houston, 2.

Texts and Contexts in the Eighth-Century Prophetic Books

This issue of social justice in the Biblical texts is the subject of numerous scholars and theological study. The project examines works of scholarship focused on social justice.

Interpreting the Prophets, edited by James L. Mays, gives a persuasive argument on the prophetic stance on justice as received and transmitted through the eighth-century Hebrew prophets. David J. Pleins argues in *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible* that comprehension of the Hebrew Bible requires more than a simple reading of the Bible. It also requires an understanding of the world of the prophet and the institutions, social structures, and values current to the biblical text. Walter J. Houston agrees with Pleins that the language of the text is an “act of communication” within a complexity of intended purpose and relationship.¹⁰⁶ Houston remarked: “[W]e should always reckon with the fact that people have perceptions of justice or injustice which depend on their traditions and the concrete situation rather than on supposedly objective measures of exploitation, which we cannot calculate in any case.”¹⁰⁷

Houston argues the Liberation Theology movement opened the door to greater discussion of Hebrew Bible texts as valid sources of biblical interpretation of justice for the communities of the poor and exploited. Although the differences between our world and the biblical world are vast and real, fruitful communication between the past and

¹⁰⁶ Houston, 10.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

present is attainable.¹⁰⁸ David Petersen finds a linkage between the character of prophetic literature and the character of the prophet.¹⁰⁹

Mays finds a direct correlation between the revealing of the plans and purposes of Yahweh and the mission and message of the eighth-century prophets. He argues that “[t]he diligent study and interpretation of the prophetic books is the only way the prophets can have their proper and authentic effect.”¹¹⁰

Houston argues that a prophetic biblical text can be the interpretive act of a small or large segment of Israelite society. It can also be an interpretive compromise of multiple factions in a society. The text will operate as an interpretive ideology that displays the interests and social relationships of a particular group.

The issue of social justice is a core component of many of the biblical writings in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Houston concludes that it is critical to the understanding of social justice in the Bible that we not become static in time. The social concerns of the prophets and the law were fluid and ever changing. “The eighth-century prophets are primarily concerned about the oppression of full citizens...”¹¹¹

Mays argues the “preservation and transmission” of the prophetic messages allows for a contemporary understanding of prophecy indispensable to the prophetic

¹⁰⁸ Houston, 4-6.

¹⁰⁹ David L. Petersen, “Introduction: Ways of Thinking about Israel’s Prophets,” in *Prophecy in Israel*, ed. David L. Petersen (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), 4.

¹¹⁰ James L. Mays, “Forward,” in *Interpreting the Prophets*, eds. James Luther Mays and Paul J. Achtemeier (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press), ix.

¹¹¹ Houston, 50.

dimensions of Judaism and Christianity.¹¹² Houston posits the hermeneutical problem comes into play when we admit the context of biblical writings is much different from our own context. The biblical writings are documents formed in communities of “small towns or villages...engaged in agriculture... professions were inherited...slavery was taken for granted and women took no part in public life.”¹¹³ The biblical texts of the Hebrew Bible do not stand apart or distanced from the contemporary world in which they came into existence.

Many of the voices represent various strata of economic and social classes in ancient Israel. As writing was not a common skill during the time of these writings, it is likely that the writing is the work of an educated member of society. “If Amos is described as a shepherd, so and with the same word is Mesha king of Moab: it certainly does not entitle us to think of Amos as a simple rustic....”¹¹⁴ These facts, however, do not preclude our hearing the voices of the poor and humble within the pages of the prophetic writings. At best, it is informed hearsay and with a bias influenced by the interests of ancient Israel’s upper class.¹¹⁵ While there are undoubtedly texts that support the oppressed and their rights for social justice, there are others written from the advantage of the oppressors.

However, the poor and oppressed of Israel, like others in history, likely suffered the injustices of the oppressors with understated defiance. It is only by careful reading

¹¹² Mays, *Interpreting the Prophets*, ix.

¹¹³ Houston, 5.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

that we hear the sympathetic voices to the poor, widows, orphans, and strangers. These voices are relevant to modern calls for social justice.¹¹⁶

If, as Houston posits, the prophetic texts largely represent the viewpoint of the elite within Israel, there is yet a strong voice of sympathy for social justice alongside them. Gerhard posits that the prophet and prophetic message are phenomenon of re-emergence at a time of declining emphasis on Yahwism. Israel was becoming a state that learned to look after its own social and political affairs. The emergence of the prophets is closely connected with the “systematic emancipation from Yahweh.”¹¹⁷

Justice in the Prophetic Language

James L. Mays identifies eighth-century prophetic speech about justice as a matter of public speaking. The prophets saturate their messages around the theme of justice. There is an assumption between the speaker and hearer on this matter. The prophets do not take the time to define or explain the meaning of justice. The word itself is pregnant with various meanings. It refers to matters of fairness, impartiality, and equality. It is a word essential to social well-being. It is a social well-being affirming, “...something is happening when someone in a society insists on placing justice at the top of the value scale and persists in making it the primary agenda of concern”.¹¹⁸ A cry for justice carries with it an inherent understanding of a misappropriation of relational justice between

¹¹⁶ Houston, 8-10.

¹¹⁷ von Rad, 9.

¹¹⁸ Mays, James L. “Justice: Perspectives from the Prophetic Tradition.” in *Prophecy in Israel*, ed. David L. Petersen, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), 146.

humanity-to-humanity or humanity-to-divinity. Eighth-century Hebrew prophet Amos spoke to the assembled royal court at the sanctuary in Bethel, using the divine first person style:

I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring me choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps! But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

Amos 5:21-24

The language of the prophets is carefully crafted to shape a specific response of the audience. The prophets use judgment language that is designed to invoke a response that will produce fear, repentance, and revival. Although the prophet is speaking, the language offers the clear conveyance that God is actually the originator of the words. The words of justice are to be taken as the very words of God. Mays reiterates that righteousness verbalized in justice "...is the indispensable qualification for worship—no justice, no acceptable public religion."¹¹⁹ Israelite history focuses on Yahweh's righteousness as expressed in justice. Prophetic calls for justice are diagnoses of an unhealthy condition of the person, group, or society addressed. Mays defines justice, as viewed by the Hebrew prophets, in three levels of understanding.

First, he cites that eighth-century prophets understood the term justice as a theological term, as a term rooted in belief of Yahweh as a just God who demands justice for and from the people. These Hebrew prophets exposed their very lives to jeopardy by

¹¹⁹ Mays, "Justice: Perspectives," 146.

conveying such beliefs. However, they did so with a clear understanding of the dire circumstances facing their nation's existence. The prophets were confident that justice is part of the character of Yahweh.

Second, justice is a moral value. As Houston states, "any enduring ideological expression of the leadership of a class in society will always carry with it concessions to the subordinate classes, and in particular will contain moral ideas that are acceptable to them."¹²⁰ The prophets often pair justice with the concept of Yahweh's righteousness. Together these two terms define the moral relationship. Righteousness is a "quality of intention and act, a characteristic of persons."¹²¹ A greater comprehension of the social roots of prophetic speech and its social theology and morality, can still be useful in critical analysis of our own society concerning the political and moral debates around the issue of the just society. Houston contends:

For it is precisely in the challenge that such ideas as community, generosity, equality, liberation of slaves, crushing of oppression, return to the ancestral land, however utopian, offer to the practice of oppression within the biblical text itself that their significance lies as pointers to justice in our world today. It is obviously central to almost all ideologies of justice in the Old Testament that God acts to establish or preserve justice and righteousness.¹²²

This is the underlying premise of the eighth-century prophetic messengers of God. The prophetic message functions as an action of God to reinforce communal justice and righteousness. To do justice is to affirm Yahweh's good and to love those things that increase life. To love justice is to hate evil and reject those things that diminish life.

¹²⁰ Houston, 14-15.

¹²¹ Mays, "Justice: Perspectives," 147.

¹²² Houston, 15.

Because justice is such an important aspect to the Hebrew prophetic messages, its absence is a violation of the moral law of Yahweh. The absence of justice exposes a critical gap in the moral fiber and character of the individual, group, social institution, or governing institution. Lastly, justice is achievable. The prophets understood Yahweh's command for justice to be something attainable and practiced in the judicial courts and economy of Israel.¹²³

Justice in the Prophet's Social Context

Mays poses critical questions concerning the prophets and their context. What in the context of the Hebrew prophets caused them to focus on this idea of justice? Did they address contemporary social crises? What can be said about the content and concept of justice? Do the prophets become advocates for one segment of society over another? Did they offer a plan of social change in their messages?¹²⁴

If some of the eighth-century prophetic texts, as some argue, symbolize the interests of an elite group within Israelite society, how and why does the language of the texts give such "strong sympathy for the poor in them, denunciations of oppression and legal measures in their favor."¹²⁵ Where do the Hebrew prophets obtain their moral compass in order to offer critical analysis of their own Israelite society? According to Houston, the moral compass of the Hebrew prophets derives from the "traditions of their

¹²³ Mays, "Justice: Perspectives," 147.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Houston, 12.

own culture.”¹²⁶ The class or group of society that claims authority to direct the affairs of social society are obligated to position themselves as the protectors of the common interests of society, whether it is real or simply perceived as true.

This requires understanding of Israel’s social context. From the perspective of the Hebrew prophet, it is a context in conflict and contradiction to Yahweh’s notion of justice. Although the Hebrew prophets lack a cohesive and consistent focus among them, they tend to agree on the point of economic development.

The message of the prophets often addressed specific groups on the matter of justice. They include those persons identified as court or community officials, chiefs, leaders, elders, and persons of administrative authority and power in the social and governmental structures of Israelite society.

As Mays says, such persons held a keen interest in the accumulation of goods and land as capital. These were the early rumblings of a new economic class, such as had never truly existed in Israel prior.¹²⁷ Although the shift was legal and beneficial to the growth of an emerging state, the prophets (Amos, Isaiah, and Micah), identified the shift as a crisis of cultic practice and an injustice in the realm of social and economic realities.

Land as Inheritance and Possession

Prior to the monarchy, the economy of Israel was fueled by the small farms held by families in villages and towns around the land. There were common areas in which all

¹²⁶ Houston, 13.

¹²⁷ Mays, “Justice: Perspectives,” 148-149.

families could graze their animals. However, as the economy began to shift, so did the priority of justice within the land. Land began to accumulate in the hands of a few. This unfavorable distribution became a favorite indictment of the prophetic message. It is a message of retention of family rights to private ownership of land and property.

Mays points out the “problem was the ownership of land and the benefits and rights that went with it in Israelite society.”¹²⁸ A few became major owners of land. The confiscation of land deprives a family and individual of status and material support within the community and therefore is susceptible to becoming slaves or day laborers to survive. The monarchy and courts are the new mechanisms to enforce these new changes. The rights of the oppressed and poor (widow, orphan, and weak) lose protection against the economic system. It is defunct or simple dysfunctional.

The net result is a widening gap between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ of Hebrew society. Some have labeled this course of events as early capitalism. The new state with its taxation and its civil service brought about further disintegration of the old social order within the tribes of Israel. The focal point of Israelite economy transferred from the rural and local multi-points of relevance within the tribes of Israel to the urban towns and cities. The landowners wielded even greater economic and judicial control over the towns and villages, and the result was severe social injustice. Due to the burden of taxation by the expanding monarchy, the economically weak peasant became less able to remain debt-free. This also diminished social and political status with the nation of Israel.

¹²⁸ Mays, “Justice: Perspectives,” 148.

Ownership of land came more and more into the hands of a small number of capitalist urban residents. This allowed for the expansion of an elite socio-economic class.¹²⁹

However, Mays would disagree with the use of the term ‘capitalism,’ but agree with some of the underlying principles. This shift of resources and land creates a “shift of the primary social good, land, from the function of support to that of capital; the reorientation of social goals from personal values to economic profit; the subordination of judicial process to the interests of the entrepreneur.”¹³⁰

Legality, Wealth, and Righteousness

Mays contends the political crisis revolves around the administration of justice in the courts and legal apparatus of the local assembly in Jerusalem and in the villages and towns. These are systems of customary laws created and controlled by the monarchy. The courts are crucial to the social institution of Israel because they are the final places of settling economic and social conflict within society. The eighth-century prophets focus on the injustices occurring within the system of the courts. Amos, in commenting on the courts says:

There are those who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground. There are those who hate the one who upholds justice in court and detest the one who tells the truth.

Amos 5:7, 10

¹²⁹ von Rad, 10.

¹³⁰ Mays, “Justice: Perspectives,” 148.

Along with the customary laws of the court are the traditions of society that affirm the values and theology of the people and Yahweh. These are the sayings of Yahweh from prophet to people. They represent commands of reciprocity. Yahweh expects the people of Israel to deal with the oppressed, poor, and strangers in their midst, just as Yahweh dealt with them in times past and present.¹³¹

These are not the written commandments of law. These are, as Mays says, the “rules of righteousness.” This is why the eighth-century prophets speak of Yahweh’s justice and righteousness. The prophets’ messages were not indictments that speak of failure of the customary laws of the courts. What occurred did so under applicable laws. In other words, the actions of the unjust were legal according to the letter of the law, but were not in line with the spirit of Yahweh’s law. Mays would say “by the criterion of the values they held and the social goals to which they believed Israel was committed, it was unrighteous and, therefore, a travesty of justice.”¹³²

In this way, the people administer a justice that diminishes or validates the personal intention of the individual. It also reveals the social consequences of those intentions. The Hebrew prophets delivered messages to the people and institutions that clearly identified a conflict between Yahwistic expectations and customary law allowances. Bruce Malchow contends the laws of Israel placed charitable giving square within the realm of justice.¹³³ However, Pleins would disagree with Malchow’s

¹³¹ Mays, “Justice: Perspectives,” 151-153.

¹³² Ibid., 151-153.

¹³³ Malchow, 25-27.

contention. Pleins does not see the laws as characterizing charity as a mode of social justice.¹³⁴

As the gap between the wealthy and poor expanded, those with means to seek and receive justice also widened. Justice became a commodity of the wealthy. The eighth-century prophets speak of the corruption of judges, love of money by court administrators, and the taking of bribes by local and governmental officials. They remind the nation that Yahweh's righteousness calls for a justice of equity regardless of economic status. "But such a practice of law requires righteous people for whom the social well-being of others is a higher priority than gain."¹³⁵ It is clear from their own biographical revelations that the eighth-century prophets were not members of a single economic class. Amos was a shepherd-herder of some means and Isaiah belonged to the upper echelons of Jerusalem society.

The prophets do not advocate poverty as a virtue, nor do they reject prosperity as a possibility. However, if the acquisition and possession of land costs the economic freedom and welfare of fellow citizens, the prophets are quick to identify it as oppression and violence against Yahweh's justice. According to Mays, "if it fostered consumption at a level of luxury that was enjoyed in heedless unconcern for the needs of others, it was wrong. If it was gained by violation of the rules of righteousness... it was iniquitous."¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Pleins, 448-449.

¹³⁵ Mays, "Justice: Perspectives," 153.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 154.

The Weak and the Poor

The eighth-century prophets are best known for their concern for the poor and oppressed of Israel. Bruce Malchow acknowledges the eighth century as the time of greatest disparity of wealth between the rich and the poor in Israel.¹³⁷ As with all societies, there is a segment unable to retain self-support and status. As Israel developed its monarchy system of government and advanced into a more capitalistic style of economy, the poor and weak become natural casualties. The prophets remind the nation of the need to administer Yahweh's justice and righteousness to the least and most vulnerable among them. The prophets make the circumstances and treatment of the poor, vulnerable, and weaken the function of justice within a just society. Mays offers up the words of Isaiah:

The Lord enters into judgment against the elders and leaders of his people: "It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?" declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty.

Isaiah 3:14-15

Yahweh's Justice and Judgment

The message of the prophets is not a message of the future, but of its present reality and crisis. Prophetic judgment deals with real and tangible crisis. The message reminds the people that Yahweh's justice is the root of the social, financial, and judicial economies of the people. What we hear in the message of the prophet is the clarion call to

¹³⁷ Malchow, 31.

justice and righteousness for all citizens and residents of Israel. They can be called reformers only in the sense of reforming the hearers to once again turn to the practices of justice and righteousness as known in Yahweh. The prophets announce Yahweh's plans of corrective catastrophe as a response to societal absence and misuse of justice and righteousness. The judgment of Yahweh is sure and faithful. Mays says "it is possible for people to change when they are confronted with a contrast between what they do and the way of righteousness."¹³⁸ The other appeal is to history and Yahweh's judgment. It is imperative for the nation to remember that God has standards of justice and righteousness. As Amos informs those who have misused or violated this standard:

Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing
Amos 5:22-24

The biblical texts hold relevance to twenty-first century Christian proclamation and its individual and communal application in local contexts. Such texts help to raise the consciousness among Christians about the plight of the poor and the oppression of the marginalized and guide theological perspectives that support the work of the church on matters of social justice.

Due to various factors of social position and power, nowhere in the eighth-century prophetic writings do you read the actual writings of the poor and oppressed. It is the voices and writings of those prophetic messengers given a call of God to be the person

¹³⁸ Mays, "Justice: Perspectives," 156.

“whose means, social position or calling frees him of dependence on the ruling class, who is then in a position to observe the suffering of the poor with sympathy” and delineate God’s message to the oppressors.¹³⁹

Prophetic texts are religious texts that speak of the character and cause of Yahweh, especially on matters of righteousness and social justice. The fundamental stimulus that drives and connects these messages of moral judgment together with the divine condemnations and imperatives they establish is a theological one. Injustice and a failure of the ruling and wealthy segments of society to administer righteousness and justice among the weaker segments of Israelite society is an offense to Yahweh.

The eighth-century prophets became the human element inserted into the contemporary conditions of the people to convey the words and judgments of Yahweh. The message of the prophets established Yahweh as the ultimate guarantor of justice and the ultimate punisher for breaches of such justice and righteousness. The doing of justice and abhorrence of injustice is implied as social element of religious community. What Yahweh desires from Israel is the praxis of justice and righteousness.

Houston states it succinctly when he said, “This makes injustice not just a failure to know God, but a matter of ingratitude after all that God has done for them.”¹⁴⁰ Therefore, the moral condemnation of injustice, the compassion for the oppressed and poor, the acknowledgment of Yahweh as the foundation and defender of justice, and the commission of the eighth-century prophets as messengers of the divine to the human

¹³⁹ Houston, 56.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 95.

element all sustain Houston's argument for the prophetic function and theology of the eighth-century prophets. Houston concludes:

Despite all this, it is undeniable that in this literature we have a contribution of fundamental importance to the whole Judeo-Christian tradition of social thought, and it is important, strangely enough, because of its limitations. Through the prophets we have learnt to understand social relationships as governed by morality as interpersonal relationships are—that social relationships are more relationships, and hence that we can speak of social justice.¹⁴¹

The challenges and messages of the eighth-century prophets concerning social justice hold relevance for the challenges facing Prince William County and Manassas. What do we learn and begin to integrate into the thoughts and actions of the Christian church in light of these ancient truths? What model has eighth-century Hebrew prophetic speech and context provided First Baptist Church and its surrounding communities of Manassas and Prince William County?

First Baptist Church can transform eighth-century ideals of justice and righteousness when applying them to its own situation. Transformation is an outgrowth of communities faced with new crises of justice. The crises motivated Yahweh to send prophets with a message to find new ways to call for justice. First Baptist Church must also be motivated to find new ways to call for justice among the widening gulf that divides the ears and hearts of those in and with power to the voices of those crying out for justice and righteousness. There are few voices willing to speak of the blatant unfairness, economic disparity, and even the seizing of the property of the poor (foreclosure crisis).

¹⁴¹ Houston, 97.

It must be impressed upon First Baptist Church that God is calling the people of God to speak and act with a sense of urgency and judgment due to the extreme situations of injustice found in Prince William County. This gulf, in which lies the practical and delicate balance of justice toward the poor and oppressed, is a chasm that poorly echoes the voices of the poor and powerless regarding their plight or the efforts to speak truth to the power structures responsible for justice and righteousness.

The community of First Baptist Church finds itself in a crisis not unlike the dilemma faced by the eighth-century prophets. Although contextually different, the language and issues of justice and righteousness are similar. The primary external factors exacerbating the problem are governmental structures that continue to under-represent the needs of the poor and oppressed in and around First Baptist Church. The primary internal factors are a weakened unity that prioritizes and speaks truth to power regarding the lack of basic needs for all local citizenry.

Moved by crises, First Baptist Church now has the opportunity to break new ground by talking and learning about concepts of biblical justice and righteousness not found in previous biblical teachings; crises move them to do so. The prophets are messengers of Yahweh's wrath over new economic and social abuses that endanger and enslave the poor, oppressed, and strangers among them. First Baptist Church must position itself to learn and convey the message of social justice in Manassas and Prince William County.

It is the addition of serving in situations and institutions of common effort that will produce moments of transformation in northern Virginia. Increased engagement in

the young social justice organizing efforts of V.O.I.C.E. provides an available vehicle.

V.O.I.C.E. is a non-partisan citizens' power organization dedicated to making change on social justice issues (affordable housing, healthcare, immigration) affecting the lives of low and middle-income residents in Prince William County/Manassas.

Not unlike the Israel of the eighth-century prophets, the contemporary context of Prince William County is experiencing one of the greatest disparities of wealth between the rich and the poor. Within the borders of Manassas and Prince William County, there is a growing segment of citizens unable to be self-supporting or retain status. Yet, the current dynamics of governmental leadership advance a more capitalistic style of economy, thereby allowing the poor and weak to become natural casualties. Foreclosure rates, homelessness, and hunger are at an all-time high. Prophetic preaching will remind the community and governmental leaders of the need to administer Yahweh's justice and righteousness to the least and most vulnerable among them. Christians transform their traditions in reaction to new crises. What is new is that First Baptist Church is now working jointly with other people to face justice crises and so will achieve new biblical thought, understanding, and action together in Prince William County.

The social injustice laid upon the poor and oppressed in Prince William County, due to economic crises and unjust governmental policies, is immense. If First Baptist Church is to be true to its own Christian tradition and the ethics of the eighth-century Hebrew prophets, it must take part in the struggle against it and those it commits to serve and bring into a salvific relationship with God. The eighth-century Hebrew prophets' approaches of indictment, judgment, acceptance, adaptation, and transformation can be of

use to First Baptist Church. The church can become empowered in carrying out its mandate to address the economic, social, and judicial power structures that fail to maintain justice and righteousness for all. We must now hear the words of God as spoken to Peter in moving him to accept the new vision of making the gospel (including its arm of social justice) available to all. For God admonishes us, “not call anything impure that God has made clean.” By doing this, First Baptist Church will find itself fighting the crises of injustice with what is new and contemporary, as well as with what is old and relevant.

Historical Foundation

If you wish to understand people, study their religion, because it is the role of religion to define the values and expressions of life.¹⁴² James H. Evans, Jr. asks the relevant question: “who are we, and where are we going?”¹⁴³ It is often advantageous for the church and prophetic pastor to ask this crucial question together. So is the case with First Baptist Church and it is illustrated through the words of English poet Robert Browning. Browning writes:

¹⁴² Lincoln and Mamiya, xi.

¹⁴³ Evans, 1.

It is the nature of darkness to obscure. I am a wanderer: I remember well one journey, how I feared the track was missed, So long the city I desired to reach lay hid; when suddenly its spires afar flashed through the circling clouds; you may conceive my transport. Soon the vapors closed again, but I had seen the city, and one such glance, no darkness could obscure, nor shall the present.¹⁴⁴

As with the character in the poem, First Baptist Church and its Senior Pastor individually and collectively reached a powerful, yet dangerous, point in the journey of ministry and mission. God has given the Senior Pastor a vision of what Christian ministry can accomplish, but until recently, it was obscured by mists of comfort, convenience, and self-promotion.

The vision of an active church ministry involving a large number of congregants working on matters within the community that incorporates social justice is for the good of the people. It is also for the good of the community to display the love and care of community around the church. A vision unveiled, even if just for a moment, means “no darkness” can again obscure heaven’s truth of the city from the mind and soul, and as Browning wrote, “nor shall the present.”¹⁴⁵ Clarity of vision from God on matters of social justice enforces the need for social justice actions as integral to the faith experience of the Christian congregation. The impact can affect all structures of communal life, including spiritual, social, economic, educational, and political.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Famous-Poems.org, A Robert Browning Poem, “Paracelsus: Part IV: Paracelsus Aspires,” <http://www.famous-poems.org/poems/robert-browning/paracelsus-part-iv-paracelsus-aspires> (accessed February 28, 2010).

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Lincoln and Mamiya, xii.

Middle Passage and Denial

The Black church is unrivaled in its continual influence among Black culture and historical influence. The influence of the Black church has waned somewhat over the past few decades in the post-Civil Rights era. However, it remains an institution within the Black community that influences spheres of Black cultural and socio-economic development.¹⁴⁷ To gain an appreciation for the Black church in North America, we must examine the pains and formation of its birth. It begins with the African slave trade and the millions of enslaved Africans brought to the North American shores during the now infamous ‘Middle Passage.’ From its inception, the religion of enslaved Africans was a means to guard against the disintegration of their religious worldview.¹⁴⁸ The Black church evolved in spite of intentional suppression of religious development by the institution of slavery and the intended vestiges of segregation and racism.¹⁴⁹

Historian Gayraud Wilmore stated:

The radical nature of the historic Black Church tradition is defined by three factors: the quest for independence from white control; the revalorization of the image of Africa [and African peoples]; and the acceptance of protest and agitation as theological prerequisites for Black liberation and the liberation of all oppressed peoples.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Lawrence H. Mamiya, “Forward,” in *Black Church Studies: An Introduction*, eds. Stacy Floyd-Thomas, Juan M. Floyd-Thomas, and Carol B. Duncan (Nashville: TN Abingdon Press), xiii.

¹⁴⁸ Stacy Floyd-Thomas et al., “Black Church History,” in *Black Church Studies: An Introduction* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 5.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Since its inception as an invisible institution, the Black church has been the platform for which the Black community has organized and used to defeat the cumulative effects of slavery, segregation, and social injustice.

The slave codes of North American colonialism created legal distinctions intended to direct race relations nearly a century before the Revolutionary War and the enactment and ratification of the U.S. Constitution. By the mid-seventeenth century, Virginia enacted legislation to establish Africans as enslaved for life. Community practice held that a Christian could not be held as a slave. This created controversy and many opposed the proselytizing of slaves. Liberation of slaves had less to do with Christian principles and more to do with economic self-interest (labor force).¹⁵¹ The House of Burgess passed legislation during the same period to prevent issues of Baptism and slavery from becoming controversial by ensuring Christian baptism did not affect a person's slave status. Legislation was passed designating enslaved persons as private property.¹⁵²

Vincent L. Wimbush argues the denial of basic human and social rights to the slaves created a "type of social death for the African slaves in North America. Being cut off from ones roots, including their languages and religious heritage is devastating to one's connection to community."¹⁵³ Due to these denials, in time, African slaves developed a sense of identity and community based on their own form of Christian

¹⁵¹ Woodson, 2.

¹⁵² Floyd-Thomas, 5.

¹⁵³ Vincent L. Wimbush, "The Bible and African Americans: An Outline of an Interpretive History," in *Stony The Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Cain Hope Felder (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 82-83.

religion known as slave religion. Slave religion incorporated many of the African religious traditions while laying the foundation for the North American Black church and community. Enslaved Africans began to form a bond of community for faith and race through this avenue.¹⁵⁴

African American historian, Carter G. Woodson, believes the rise of Africans in the church was “impeded by connection with their self-styled superiors.” Black equality was not a concept under acceptance or consideration. During the American Revolution, “there was a tendency to give more consideration to all persons suffering from restriction,” however, following the American Revolution, ideologies of superiority and inequality quickly returned. “When men ceased to think so much of individual or natural rights and thought more frequently of means and measures for centralized government, the Negroes, like most elements far down, were forgotten or ignored even by the church.”¹⁵⁵

It is out of this context of struggle that Christianity and African slaves in the South have struggled to find freedom and equality. Slave religion was a response to the slave master’s intentional deformity of biblical interpretation.

The Great Awakenings

The religious revivalism period, known as the Great Awakening, marked a turning point in moving the Christian faith of African Americans from an invisible

¹⁵⁴Floyd-Thomas, 5-6.

¹⁵⁵Woodson, 61.

institution toward a concrete and visible formation.¹⁵⁶ In the mid-to-late eighteenth century, Congregationalist preachers Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield began a revivalist movement to reach more people with the Christian message of salvation. Both evangelists preached to Whites and Blacks alike. The revivals of the Great Awakening emphasized singing, emotionalism, physical movement, and personal rebirth. Prior to the Great Awakening, the number of African converts to Christianity was minimal since slave masters refused to allow slaves to hear the Christian message. There was fear that Christian conversion would be a stepping stone toward freedom, justice, and equality.¹⁵⁷ Despite this fear, the movement reached a significant number of slaves who converted to Christianity. As a result, the traditions of African religion began to infuse forms of worship. It melded colonial Christianity with Black religious experience. "Revivalists appealed to the poor of all races and emphasized spiritual equality. Evangelicals Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians opened their fledgling churches to Black people during the colonial era."¹⁵⁸ The first independent Black churches formed in the second half of the eighteenth century.

The Baptist movement moved from England to the Americas with the American Baptist movement emerging in the first half of the seventeenth century. Mission work played a major role in the growth of the Baptist movement throughout the United States

¹⁵⁶ Floyd-Thomas, 6.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 6.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 7-8.

of America.¹⁵⁹ The Baptist denomination gained large influence in the direction and development of the Black church. The Baptist Church espoused a belief in the equality of all believers, in moral self-determination, and in less stringent demands for ministerial education. The late eighteenth century was a time of spiritual and social stress and tension. Enslaved Blacks admitted to Baptist congregations had very limited privileges. Yet, they “found significant reasons to embrace the Baptist tradition in the antebellum South.” The first independent Black churches, which formed in the second half of the eighteenth century, “were typically Southern and rural with notable exceptions like New York City’s Abyssinian Baptist Church (1808).”¹⁶⁰

There would also be significant influence among the Methodist denomination on the emerging Black church. The centralization of Methodist congregations into regional conferences gave a sense of church fellowship that appealed to significant segments of the emerging Black church population.¹⁶¹ In fact, the genesis of the Black church is often traced “...to the establishment of the Free African Society, organized in Philadelphia in 1787, by Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and other African American members of St. George’s Methodist Episcopal Church.”¹⁶²

Vincent L. Wimbush summarizes the impact of this new evangelical movement upon the African communities in the eighteenth century and the establishment of the

¹⁵⁹ Lincoln and Mamiya, 20-22.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁶¹ Floyd-Thomas, 8-9.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 9.

Black church. Wimbush stated:

The sacralization of the Bible among white evangelical Protestants, North and South, could hardly have been ignored by the Africans.... It would have been difficult not to take note of the diversity of views that reading the Bible could inspire, not only between North and South as cultural, political reading, but also among evangelical communities—Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian. The lesson that the Africans learned from these evangelicals was not only that faith was to be interpreted in light of the reading of the Bible, but also that each person had freedom of interpretation of the Bible.... They could read certain parts and ignore others. They could and did articulate their interpretations in their own way—in song, prayers, sermons, testimonies, and addresses.... They were attracted primarily to the narratives of the Hebrew Bible dealing with the adventures of the Hebrews in bondage and escaping from bondage, to the oracles of the eighth-century prophets and their denunciations of social injustice and visions of social justice, and to the New Testament texts concerning the compassion, passion and resurrection of Jesus.¹⁶³

This Great Awakening led to the independent Black church movement, which led to the establishment of the AME and AME Zion churches in the North and South.

Invisible Institution Becomes Visible

By the nineteenth century, most Black churches in the South practiced a form of Protestantism similar to that of their White counterparts. Black churches were maturing into institutions of socio-economic and socio-political community centers among the Black communities. It is during this period that many African slaves begin to verbally tire of Southern White ministers preaching the value of obedience to slave masters and the biblical mandate of slavery based on their misinterpretation of the curse of Ham in the Old Testament. This caused slaves to create Black church as an invisible institution.

¹⁶³ Wimbush, 86.

Black slave preachers offered lessons derived from the stories of the Book of Exodus of the Old Testament. Through protest, the invisible Black church “wrested their humanity from the grip of inhumane bondage through their worship of the sacred.”¹⁶⁴ Independent Black congregations in the North spoke out against the continued institution of slavery in the South.¹⁶⁵ With the new ability of Northern African Americans to freely assembly with Christian congregations, the growth and formation of Black churches in the North did so as visible institutions.¹⁶⁶ The personal sanctification faith value within the Methodist denomination held great appeal to Northern African Americans. Furthermore, the advancement of the Great Awakening moved Christian morality into political spheres. By the mid-nineteenth century, Northern Black preachers spoke for “a liberating faith” that spoke of physical and spiritual realities.¹⁶⁷

Abolitionist and Methodist minister Frederick Douglass eloquently revealed the hypocrisy of American Christianity in an 1845 speech. Douglass stated:

¹⁶⁴ Floyd-Thomas, 12-13.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

The Christianity of America is a Christianity, of whose votaries it may be truly said, as it was of the ancient scribes and Pharisees, "They bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. All their works they do for to be seen of men." ...Dark and terrible as is this picture, I hold it to be strictly true of the overwhelming mass of professed Christians of AmericaThey would be shocked at the proposition of fellowshipping a sheep-stealer; and at the same time they hug to their communion a man-stealer, and brand me an infidel, if I find fault with them for it. They attend with Pharisaical strictness to the outward forms of religion, and at the same time neglect the weightier matters of law, judgment, mercy, and faith.¹⁶⁸

Black churches and ministers were active in the anti-slavery movement, and where possible, assisting those wishing to escape the Southern bondage of slavery. Bethel AME Church in Philadelphia housed secret quarters for escaping slaves. Harriet Tubman, the great conductor of the Underground Railroad, is famous for the number of journeys she made into the enslaved South to return with hundreds of slaves escaping to freedom.¹⁶⁹ The Black churches of the North became vital mouthpieces of social justice and were significant in the Abolitionist Movement. Black clergy entered their pulpits to rail against slavery, racial discrimination, and hypocritical northern white churches.¹⁷⁰

Black Church and the Civil War

The Black church was the only institution able to offer the enslaved a message of hope and survival. By the mid-nineteenth century, the looming discontent between the North and South led many white Southerners to voice protest to the free Blacks and the

¹⁶⁸ Wimbush, 91.

¹⁶⁹ Mitchell, 133.

¹⁷⁰ Floyd-Thomas, 15.

Black communities among them.¹⁷¹ “The significance of the Civil War within the African American experience was defined by the insurmountable struggle to liberate all people of African descent and make certain that freedom, justice, and equality would be the rightful inheritance for them and their progeny.”¹⁷²

Free Blacks and the Black churches began to separate from the Southern Methodist Episcopal Church after the Civil War. These freed slaves gravitated to the Baptist denomination due to the perception of greater democracy within the Baptist denomination. Carter G. Woodson wrote “Every man was to be equal to every other man and no power without had authority to interfere. This situation in the Baptist Church appealed very strongly to the then recently enfranchised Negro in the reconstructed States.”¹⁷³ Rural churches and clergy were among the earliest institutions emerging out of the Black communities. This brought about the migration of Southern Blacks into the urban Northern states and cities. Due to limited family networks in the North, the Black church became a surrogate social and family network in the Black community.¹⁷⁴ Reconstruction began in the schools, not in the politics of the era. Missionaries taught in the educational structures of Black communities long before the end of the Civil War.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Floyd-Thomas, 15.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Woodson, 174-175.

¹⁷⁴ Lincoln and Mamiya, 115-116.

¹⁷⁵ Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings*, 140.

Evolution of the Modern Black Church

The general definition of the Black church is simply a Christian congregation predominantly populated by Blacks. A better definition of the Black church tradition formulates it as:

specific Protestant denominations that were created, founded, governed, and populated by Blacks, reflecting an organized religiosity that merges Protestant doctrines of faith with an unapologetic cultural and political awareness in order to be intentionally relevant to the social and spiritual plight of African Americans.”¹⁷⁶

The most sought after commodities within the newly established Black churches were the necessities of life (food, water, shelter, and clothing) and educational opportunities. These matters involved an engagement in the power structures or systems that dictated access and equality to these necessities and opportunities. Ultimately, there was a need to engage the political process for redress of injustices surrounding access and equality. Black Churches began to engage in local and national politics in order to affect Reconstructionist politics after the Civil War. In time following the Civil War, Black churches gained a semblance of autonomy; Black clergy and congregation gained freedom from white church surveillance, interference, and governance on what, when, where, and how to lead within their own communities.¹⁷⁷

Although the end of the Civil War afforded Southern Black ministers more freedom to address issues of racism and oppression in the pulpit, they still had to monitor

¹⁷⁶Floyd-Thomas, 17-18.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 22-23.

their criticisms of White supremacy. Every Black preacher readily understood that every comment about racism and prejudice might invite some form of retaliation or even lynching from Whites opposed to racial equality.

Yet, not all Black ministers retreated from the lethal and egregious intimidation tactics of Southern White Christians, in particular, and individual Whites in general. Some church leaders, such as Bishop Henry McNeal Turner of the AME Church, were defiant and demanding of their human rights; they spoke out against racial denigration and separation and its negative impact on the African American religious experience.¹⁷⁸ Out of this struggle arose a Black church that operates as a “refuge and hospitality center” for those downtrodden and oppressed.¹⁷⁹

The Black Church helped countless African Americans make the transition from Southern peasant to Northern and Midwest workforce worker. As time progressed, the Black Church helped untold numbers of Black communities survive the Great Depression and economic hardships. The Black Church organized churches by pooling their resources as well as providing spiritual solace and hopeful inspiration.¹⁸⁰ The African American church tradition embraced the responsibility for the needy within the Black communities. This responsibility is traceable to ethnic and religious roots, rather than popular social theories.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸Floyd-Thomas, 25-26.

¹⁷⁹Stewart, *Black Spirituality*, 107.

¹⁸⁰Floyd-Thomas, 26-27.

¹⁸¹Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings*, 137.

Black Church and the Civil Rights Movement

Henry Mitchell surmises, “an accurate record would have to report early African American churches as striving both for people to be saved from sin and to be set free from systematic political, social, and economic oppression.”¹⁸² Journalist and political analyst Juan Williams once wrote that “Pope John Paul II, Bishop Tutu, and Archbishop Romero offered glittering examples of the power of religion to provoke and support social justice.” However, the Civil Rights Movement reveals “God’s power to transform society.”¹⁸³ Williams acknowledges that in America’s battle with itself over slavery, legal segregation, and civil rights laws, the power of faith has been the cornerstone of efforts to save the nation’s soul.¹⁸⁴ Such institutional abuses greatly influenced the Black church’s notion of God being an avenging, conquering, and liberating God. During the Civil Rights Era, Black churches across the nation picked up the cross of Christ Jesus and spoke truth to power in the fight for righteousness and equality.¹⁸⁵ The movement became a prolific developer of Black leadership. Civil Rights giants like United Methodist minister James Lawson, Baptist ministers Martin Luther King, Jr., Fred Shuttlesworth, Ralph Abernathy, C.T. Vivian, and others became prominent civil rights leaders.

Author and professor of religion at the University of Notre Dame Mark A. Noll talks of the importance of Black churches, in particular, during the time of the Civil

¹⁸² Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings*, 130.

¹⁸³ Williams and Dixie, 1-2.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings*, 231.

Rights Movement.¹⁸⁶ Noll offers three points of importance that clarify the African-American religion that has meant so much for contemporary American history. First, the intellectually sophisticated convictions of educated Civil Rights Movement leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. represented a compound of many elements. King and other public leaders of the Civil Rights Movement represented one element. Their efforts and theology grew from such giants of the past as Henry Turner and the non-violent Indian protest movement of Mahatma Ghandi against the British colonialist. King studied the writings of various theologians and philosophers in an attempt to transform the movement toward social justice.

Second, the sophisticated convictions of such leaders match and balance the pre-critical beliefs of many civil rights foot soldiers whose religion remains close to the elemental faiths of the nineteenth century. The simple, yet concrete faith of the early Black church continued to uphold a faith that wrapped itself in the truth of the Exodus story of Moses and the Israelites. In a sense, the old-time religious beliefs and stalwarts of a time past remained an important element of the social justice movement. This is important because passion for social justice develops outside of the critical analysis of Scripture, but in the passionate faith and power of the God of Scripture.

Third, the particular history of African-American thought explains why the faith that drove the Civil Rights Movement differed markedly from other varieties of American religion.¹⁸⁷ The conservative and liberal strains of Black religion and scriptural

¹⁸⁶ Noll, 107.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

understanding were able to work together in a unique way that was foreign to mainstream Protestant beliefs at the time. All elements of the Christian faith stepped beyond personal faith convictions to embrace and advance the goal of social justice for Black Americans.

Black Church in Post-Civil Rights

The Black church played a pivotal and leading role in expressing Black social grievances and dissatisfaction during the Civil Rights. Yet, the Black church has failed to maintain its political “momentum within the contemporary American political context.”¹⁸⁸ The political mobilization of Black churches caused heartache among the Religious Right and hope among others. The 1984 and 1988 Presidential runs by the Reverend Jesse Jackson are attempts to renew the spirit of the Civil Rights Movement. The social justice bent of the Black church included a vision of equal inclusion within the politics of the U.S.¹⁸⁹

Scholar, preacher, and educator, Robert Franklin, indicates the historical influence of Black churches appears to be weakening. Congregations in low-income communities have little outreach to its surrounding communities. Many Black churches have morphed into commuter congregations, as many of its attendees drive in from the suburbs to attend worship services. This leads to a deficit in the knowledge and issues of the community in

¹⁸⁸ R. Drew Smith, “Assessing the Public Policy Practices of African American Churches,” in *Long March Ahead: African American Churches and Public Policy in Post-Civil Rights America*, vol.2, ed. R. Drew Smith (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 9.

¹⁸⁹ Floyd-Thomas, 40.

which the Black church sits.¹⁹⁰ Research is beginning to postulate that larger, economically stable churches led by pastors who are better educated and prophetically oriented tend to sponsor a greater number of social service programs and engage in greater efforts of social justice.¹⁹¹ Henry Mitchell, James Cone, and Gayraud Wilmore all agree that the faith reality of Jesus as the Son of God continues to direct and influence Black church preaching and worship.¹⁹² The Black church continues to hold the position of a central institution in Black communities. The Black church remains historic in its role as the birthing center of religious and social networks and organizations like Black sororities, fraternities, and social justice organizations. “These Black secular organizations also allowed clergy and church members to influence the institutions and political processes of the larger society....”¹⁹³ Evans, Jr. believes one of the tasks of the pastor is to “clarify the contexts—historical, sociopolitical, cultural, and intellectual—in which African-American Christian faith is affirmed.”¹⁹⁴ Stewart argues it is Black culture and spirituality driving the paradigm of freedom. The Black church is the crucible

¹⁹⁰ Robert M. Franklin, *Crisis in the Village: Restoring Hope in African American Communities* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 111.

¹⁹¹ Barnes, *Priestly and Prophetic Influences*, 202-221.

¹⁹² Lincoln and Mamiya, 4.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

¹⁹⁴ Evans, 3.

through which both flourish. L. Alex Swann stated:

The oppressed and powerless could not survive if they did not develop an ability to understand, manage, and endure suffering. It is not an acceptance of suffering but a way of perceiving one's position in relation to the social order, and what is necessary to develop character and personality of endurance. The black church has assisted blacks in the process of character and personality development.¹⁹⁵

The Black church historically thrives as a cultural center that celebrates the innovation and free expression of prophetic preaching and praxis. Cultural and spiritual freedom translates into a praxis that finds its truth in social and external expression in the larger movements of society. Stewart writes:

Historically, we have seen how movements for social change have been spawned, ignited, or influenced by the black church, and this is largely due to its genius in cultivating the ethos and norms that make free, soul force expression necessary in the personal realm while providing a rationale for translating that expression as protest in the social realm.¹⁹⁶

The revelation of the true God comes through an historic struggle for liberation and self-awareness. It is the outcome, as Evans describes it, "of an experiential appropriation of the Gospel," yet it forms a connection between God's manifestation and God's intentions.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Stewart, *Black Spirituality*, 107.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 108.

¹⁹⁷ Evans, 11.

Studies conducted in the early twentieth century indicate the Black church experienced fast growth in economic and membership numbers. Lincoln and Mamiya conclude:

In each city there were a few leading churches and preachers who took a prophetic stance in attempting to meet the great needs of the migrants by using their church's resources to provide help with food, shelter, clothing, and employment. In the 1920s Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., opened one of the first soup kitchens for the hungry migrants just after his church, Abyssinian Baptist, had moved uptown to Harlem.¹⁹⁸

In so doing, more and more Black churches began to establish outreach ministries and programs. These efforts were due, in part, to a socially aware clerical leadership that lead to church-sponsored social service programs in the local communities. Community outreach became the springboard to greater participation in “interdenominational and social change-oriented movements.”¹⁹⁹

Yet, some of the challenges to this growth and influence have been the splitting of the Black community into economic strata or class divisions. Many churches are becoming either a “middle-income working-class congregation, or a lower-income working and dependent poor” congregation.²⁰⁰ This bifurcation threatens to weaken the unity among Black congregations around the need for a renewed social justice consciousness. Some of the more affluent congregations may retreat to the priestly functions of Christian ministry, while ignoring the more prophetic and challenging

¹⁹⁸ Lincoln and Mamiya, 121.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 190-191.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 384.

aspects of Christian ministry. Although this is a legitimate concern, the Black church remains a constant institution of “spiritual refuge with a social consciousness.” As an institution, it generally continues to recognize the full prophetic needs of the church and community through the ministry of mind, body, and soul. The current needs of the church and community, according to Lincoln and Mamiya, are spiritual (internal) and physical (external).²⁰¹

The 1970s saw a general decline in the reputation and dependence on the Black church regarding matters of social justice. This was due in part to the end of the Civil Rights Movement, the rise of more radical factions within the Black community, and the church’s surrender of its social activism role to organizations such as the NAACP and others.²⁰² A movement centered on personal piety, a growing Black middle class less interested in confrontation, and a growing Black clergy unwilling to risk itself, all played a role in the suppression of a once prophetic call to issues of social justice in the Black church.²⁰³ Lincoln and Mamiya conclude:

Today’s Black Church is struggling for relevance in the resolution of today’s black problems: racism; drug abuse; childcare; health and welfare; housing; counseling; unemployment; teenage pregnancy; the false securities of conspicuous consumption; and the whole tragic malaise with which society in general is burdened. It must address all these social challenges without abandoning its distinctive mandate to assist human beings in their efforts to find conciliation and comfort with their Creator. There is no moratorium on the human need for spiritual and moral nurture.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Lincoln and Mamiya, 397-398.

²⁰² Pinn, 18.

²⁰³ Ibid, 18-19.

²⁰⁴ Lincoln and Mamiya, 398.

Marvin A. McMickle challenges the Black church to move away from a form of church that is more concerned with “getting your praise on, to shift toward the prophetic call for justice and righteousness.”²⁰⁵ With the upward mobility of many Blacks in urban areas within the United States has come the formation of mega churches and a preaching theology identified as prosperity gospel. Despite the growth of the mega-church industry, some Black mega churches preach and teach a theology committed to social justice. This has created a needed divide among these large congregations that advocate the prosperity gospel and those advocating a prophetic gospel of social justice within the Black church tradition.²⁰⁶

A Black hip-hop musical group called Arrested Development was famous in the 1990s. They recorded a song that spoke volumes to the popular culture’s understanding of the Black church at the time. The song is entitled “Fishin’ 4 Religion.” It comes from their 1992 “3 Years 5 Months and 2 days in the life of” album. The song is critical of the diminished value of sociopolitical vision within the Black churches. The song debates the merits of clergy who preach and teach for their congregants to pray about their ills and problems rather than become active in doing something about them. According to the lyrics, the churches are “substituting worship and shouting for activism.”²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ McMickle, 16.

²⁰⁶ Floyd-Thomas, 44.

²⁰⁷ Pinn, 20-21.

For this is the call and command of the Lord God through the Hebrew prophet

Amos:

Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps.
But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!
Amos 5:22-24

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Hypothesis

Authentic prophetic preaching and teaching draws the Christian faith community into God's reality to demonstrate church participation and community praxis. It is a reality which disturbs and disrupts the comfort and content of conventional wisdom to remain priestly in function alone. It is the responsibility of clergy to lay out the nexus between prophetic and pastoral ministries and the biblical mandate to integrate both equally into the life and ministry of the congregation. The prophetic ministry of pastors is not optional; it is required as a vital characteristic of their role and identity. When fully embraced, the prophetic ministry weaves itself into the fabric of Christian Kerygma (preaching and teaching) and demonstrates its truth in daily Christian living. Preaching and teaching justice is a core value of Christian proclamation, teaching doctrine, and praxis. They present a necessary conjoining in application and practice; yoked as necessary within church discipleship.

The conceptual approach to preaching and teaching prophetic ministry corresponds to a medical understanding of the functionality of the human brain. Medical science states that the cerebrum, the largest part of the human brain, consists of two equal hemispheres—the left and right hemisphere. Although similar in size, each hemisphere

possesses specialized functions. The left hemisphere commands the right side of the body and dictates the comprehension of language (oral and written) as well as mathematics and logic. The right hemisphere commands the left side of the body and dictates the artistic abilities, memory, and facial recognition.¹ Although separate, the hemispheres are co-dependent upon the other to establish a fully functional human brain. A person can exist without both hemispheres fully functional; but such a person demonstrates neurological deficiency that affects functioning). In the same way, the local church must develop a model of ministry that equally engages the major hemispheres of the church's discipleship process (priestly proclamation and teaching ministries). To focus exclusively on the preaching aspect of Christian discipleship, to the detriment of a strong Christian Education ministry, is to exist without both hemispheres fully functional in Christian Kerygma.

This project advances the discussion of the relationship between prophetic preaching and teaching to elicit a stronger and more positive congregational participation in social justice activities. Like the human brain, a church can exist without both the preaching and teaching ministries fully prioritized and functioning within the congregation. However, such a church can be classified as having a theological deficiency that affects both proclamation and praxis. Such a church body is handicapped. A fully functional church view of Christian Kerygma and discipleship must regard prophetic teaching and preaching as co-dependent in application within the local congregation. Both applications concern themselves with the experiences of individual

¹ Lia Stannard, "Human Brain Hemispheres," [Livestrong.com](http://www.livestrong.com/article/78829-human-brain-hemispheresb), <http://www.livestrong.com/article/78829-human-brain-hemispheresb> (accessed December 1, 2012).

and congregational comprehension and praxis of the prophetic truths of God and discipleship derived in both.

Therefore, it is ill advised to limit matters of social justice to a consigned corner of ministry within a Christian congregation. Such relegation ultimately marginalizes the concerns and issues of biblical justice. Congregational engagement in matters of social justice is an outgrowth of prophetic discipleship that engages the congregant's thoughts and actions. The expected result is to increase the chance of attracting larger numbers of Christian participants in organized efforts of social justice and actions and who are willing to protest social injustices that marginalize and oppress the poor and powerless within the respective local communities.

The classical eighth-century prophets, after allowance for social, contextual, and textual distortion, offer relevant moments of social justice as a revitalizing and inspiring resource for contemporary Christian proclamation and praxis within the Black church, in particular, First Baptist Church. This understanding develops from the critical examination of the ideologies and theologies of social justice in selected writings in the Biblical canon.

The importance of the local congregational context suggests three hypotheses concerning the effects of prophetic preaching and teaching on participation in matters of social justice. The three hypotheses are:

- First, congregants who hold to an exclusive evangelistic belief of church priority alone are less likely to be civically active than Christians who are less theologically inclined to hold such an exclusive viewpoint.

- Second, congregants who are more civically active outside of the local church are more likely to be more civically active inside the local church.
- Third, churches that engage in prophetic preaching and teaching are more likely to attract and encourage an increase in social justice praxis within the local community.

It is the project's hypothesis that Black Christian congregations have the potential to be significantly more informed and, consequently, more active in matters of social justice and community engagement through intentional prophetic leadership.

There must be a re-awakening within the Black church to the fact that it has never simply been a praying and worshipping community caring only for the soul. The Black church must be encouraged to, once again, embrace its prophetic dimension to stand as a moral agent of God that sees and reacts to injustice as God does. The objective is manifestation of a greater understanding of social justice, ministry dialogue, and innovative application within First Baptist Church's actions in Manassas, Prince William County, and northern Virginia.

A prophetic proclamation (preaching and teaching) and praxis of clergy and laity within First Baptist Church offers a more complete and full witness of the Christian Scriptures and the will of God to the world. As worship and praise are not ends in themselves, authenticity requires attention to the Black church's role of producing practical manifestations of its witness toward social justice. This is possible only if the whole congregation (clergy and laity) spiritually and practically engages in comprehending the biblical writings and narratives that support the goal and place of

social justice in the mission and vision of the church. An intentional learning process uplifts the value of social justice within the practical theology of the Black church. The goal is to reestablish the importance of a permanent revision of self-possibilities in Christ. It is a goal that benefits the individual and congregation as well as the local and global community.

The church validates its prophetic witness toward God's social justice, as supported by Scripture, by raising its internal value of social justice within the practical mission and communal and internal works of social justice of the individual First Baptist Church congregant as well as the entire congregation. One opportunity to expand the prophetic witness into the surrounding communities is by increasing participation of the membership in social justice endeavors such as the community organizing efforts for political and social change of V.O.I.C.E.

The importance of preaching and teaching is made clear in the New Testament Pastoral letter of 1 Timothy (in particular Chapters 4 and 5). The letter outlines pastoral responsibilities, part of which is to be devoted to preaching and teaching. The letter makes clear the importance of both practices (as two sides of the same coin, if you will) being performed in the local church.

For this is the command to Timothy:

Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.

1 Timothy 4:11-13

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

1 Timothy 5:17

Intervention

This project presents a model of ministry that conceptualizes the theory and practice of social justice in pedagogical and proclamation practices of First Baptist Church. The words and actions of the eighth-century Hebrew prophets and Jesus the Christ in the Gospel of Luke are the prime scriptural support. Other biblical texts play a supportive role to these texts. In so doing, the goal is to correlate a direct influence on the involvement of current membership involvement as well as to support the development of personal participation in faith-based community organizing for social transformation. The focus of the project lies in the confidence that the social critique of the classical eighth-century Hebrew prophets and the revolutionary politics of Jesus the Christ support the premise that the Word of God makes the case for the place of social justice in the church's ethics, teaching, proclamation, and ministry practices.

Social justice activism has historically been a common factor in the life of the Black Church's proclamation and Christian education. Clergy and laity leadership helped move the local church beyond the confines of fellowship ministry and into the local community to engage in spiritual and social matters of care and support.

This project entails the usage of one sermon and a three-part series of sermons (proclamation) synchronized with a four-part Adult Sunday School curriculum (four

Sunday School lessons). The purpose of these activities is to aid in advancing the biblical foundations for the commitment of First Baptist Church as an informed and active agent for social justice within Prince William County and beyond (praxis).

During the project, participants engaged in a shared learning experience provided by the Sunday worship sermons and Adult Sunday School classroom learning. This experiential learning engaged participants in directed activities that disseminated theological expositions on the matter of social justice and sought to increase participants' understanding of the biblical information presented.

Research Design

A qualitative study design was used to determine the benefits of prophetic preaching and teaching of the Christian social justice ethic. The benefits were generally defined as understanding and engendering a definitive and personal motivational response of commitment to participate in church-supported or sponsored social justice efforts. Data was collected using surveys, questionnaires, and one-on-one phone interviews. Triangulation of the data was used to gain deeper understanding of the findings.

This qualitative, action research project was designed in an attempt to identify an effective approach to allay congregants' apprehension regarding engagement in social justice initiatives and to renew learning and a desire for practical action through Christian engagement in public matters of social, political, and economic injustice within the local

community. The project seeks to answer the determinative question of whether the Church, as a basic tenet of faith, is able to address in a formal, public way the social, political, and economic issues of injustice in secular society. This phenomenological research was designed to measure the subjective experiences of project participants exposed to proclamation and classroom learning of biblical social justice. The project seeks to document personal motivational responses of participants to engage in church-supported or sponsored social justice efforts. This includes such matters as greater participation in faith-based community organizing initiatives.

Measurement

The project sought to measure the results of the treatment on changes in perception regarding the value of social justice within the Black Church as a revitalization of mission and vision. It was hypothesized that this increase would occur through the reexamination of the eighth-century prophets and the Gospel messages of Christ by way of preaching and teaching of relevant biblical scriptures in support of social justice. The project is based on the belief that a Christian liberation pedagogy highlighting the prophetic, political, and social dimensions of ministry and integrating it within the Christian education (proclamation and group study) has the potential to engender a motivational response to participation in local church social justice efforts. In particular, it was expected that the project will show a greater inclination toward personal participation in faith-based organizing efforts (e.g., V.O.I.C.E.) or other new First Baptist

Church ministry possibilities focused on social justice. Outcomes were measured through two surveys and questionnaires along with one-on-one phone interviews. The surveys include three scenarios addressing social justice issues (health care, housing, and teaching of English) and solicit participants' responses to them. The questionnaires solicited in-depth information on the respondent's views about and participation in services and activities of First Baptist Church. The surveys and questionnaires were designed to measure whether individual attitudes changed after hearing the sermons and participating in the teaching series.

Instrumentation

Surveys and questionnaires were created to capture adjustments or changes in attitude and activities of participants regarding social justice as a basic tenet of praxis in the church. Context associates, recruited from within First Baptist Church's Christian Education ministry worked together to collect pre- and post treatment data using a 30-question self-administered Survey, a 30-question self-administered Questionnaire, and a 30-question phone Interview.

All Adult Sunday School participants were invited to participate. The average Sunday attendance in Adult Sunday School is approximately forty-five persons. Only twenty-four persons actually choose to participate. Those twenty-four were randomly selected to receive only one of the three methods of data collection. A maximum of eight persons were randomly selected for each collection method (online Survey, online

Questionnaire, one-on-one telephone interview using the Questionnaire). Interview participants do not know they are being asked the questions from the online Questionnaire. Each participant is unaware of another participant's selection (unless they reside in the same household). A husband may have randomly been assigned the questionnaire and his wife a survey. All First Baptist Church members who participated in the Adult Sunday School were invited to participate in the data collection. Upon acceptance to participate, a letter from the researcher, outlining the research project and participation in the research project was sent to each participant. Each letter indicated the participant's randomly selected method of data collection and the timeline for completion: Survey, Questionnaire, or one-on-one Interview. See Appendix B for generic letters sent to study participants and context

Self-administered Survey

The Survey entitled, Church and Community Involvement, was designed to capture a generalized understanding of the motivational factors for Christian and congregational praxis via situational awareness. The Survey examines the effectiveness of factors (i.e. preaching and teaching) to encourage involvement in social justice praxis as an individual and congregation. The instrument also captures demographic information for comparative study (e.g. gender, age range, marital status, employment status, education level, income range, and race/ethnicity). No identifying information (e.g. name, social security number, or date of birth) was collected that would allow anyone to identify any of the participants.

To correlate a prophetic versus priestly orientation to community outreach, several scenarios were designed for inclusion in the Survey. As an example, the Survey presents a scenario concerning congregational engagement and hospitality toward the local immigrant population. The Survey states:

State-funded programs cannot meet the demand for English tutoring among the growing number of immigrants in our communities. Prince William County (which includes Manassas and Manassas Park) experienced a large percentage increase in the number of adults and children with limited English proficiency. Due to limited funds, only a small portion of those adults were able to enroll in state-funded English for Speakers of Other Language classes. A non-profit organization that offers such classes is in need of space to host English for Speakers of Other Language classes. They are reaching out to schools, churches, and businesses for space.

Several statements regarding the church's role were included after the scenarios. For example, the church should help a little but not lead. For each statement, the respondent was asked to rate using the following five-point scale:

- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Undecided
- Somewhat Disagree
- Disagree

See Appendix C for the pre- and post Surveys.

Self-administered Questionnaire

The pre- and post Questionnaire captures a generalized understanding of the motivational factors for Christian and congregational praxis through theological awareness. The Questionnaire examines the effectiveness of preaching and teaching in encouraging involvement in social justice praxis as an individual and congregation. The instrument also captures demographic information for comparative study (e.g. gender, age range, marital status, employment status, education level, income range, and race/ethnicity). No identifying information (e.g. name, social security number, or date of birth) was collected that would allow anyone to identify any of the participants. To correlate a prophetic more than priestly orientation to community outreach, items were designed that describe a number of tasks that the local church could perform. For each item the participant is asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with the congregational emphasis:

Listed below are a number of task statements that your local church could perform. Please mark each statement by indicating whether you generally agree with the statement (that is, Generally Satisfied), whether you feel your congregation needs to Give More Emphasis (that is, it needs to do more of it or do it better); whether you feel it receive Too Much Emphasis in your congregation (that is, it needs to do less of it); or, you feel the church should Stay Out of It (that is, it is not something the church should be doing). Please mark only one answer for each statement.

The following is an example of a statement included in the Questionnaire along with the available responses:

Engage in acts of charity and service for persons in need in the community and worldwide.

- Give More Emphasis
- Generally Satisfied
- Too Much Emphasis
- Stay Out of It

See Appendix D for the pre- and post Questionnaires. Prior to distribution to randomly-selected participants, an assigned Context Associate converted the Survey and Questionnaire instruments into online Surveys using SurveyMonkey®.

Telephone Interview

In order to gather a different perspective, a variation of the community Questionnaire was delivered using a phone Interview protocol. The randomly selected participants for the one-on-one phone interview were called by a Context Associate who read the questionnaire over the phone. Context associates delivered the Questionnaire and recorded response during the one-on-one interview. It is believed that participant responses captured in interview questioning, without the aid of visually reading the question, often elicit views and opinions different from self-administered questions.

Project Variables

Independent variables are those variables that influence or affect outcomes. For this project, the independent variables include demographic information (e.g. gender, age range, marital status, employment status, education level, income range, and race/ethnicity). They also include the treatment components including the sermons, the Adult Sunday School lessons, the preacher of the sermon series, the questionnaire interviewers, and Adult Sunday School teachers. Dependent variables are those results that are influenced by the independent variables. For this project, dependent variables include the questionnaire and survey responses, participant attendance during the treatment period, and verifiable changes of praxis (e.g. participation in the church's social justice program or other church social justice endeavors).

In summary, this project was designed to address a number of pedagogical and practical questions. As a contribution to the field of practical theology and theological education, can pedagogical approaches and educational practices coalesce in developing Christians who engage or reengage in social justice transformation practices? Can prophetic proclamation and Christian education motivate individuals and congregations to move beyond spirit-filled worship and evangelistic-only action? Can it engender an equally needed spirit-filled work that meets the social needs of justice in the daily lives of those in community? How do the Adult Sunday School class participants at First Baptist Church understand the meaning of biblical social justice? Can prophetic preaching and teaching of the eighth-century Hebrew prophets and Jesus the Christ disturb and disrupt

the conventional wisdom of the church maintaining a public persona of salvific evangelism only?

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

As indicated in Chapter Four, the intervention in this project consisted of a multiple sermon series and four Adult Sunday School lessons. This chapter describes the project participants, data collection, and implementation of the intervention.

Project Participants

The population used for this project was drawn from congregation of the First Baptist Church. Members participating in the data collection effort were drawn from the Adult Sunday School class. The sermon series was preached to the entire congregation, of which the Adult Sunday School participants were engaged. Individuals in the Adult Sunday School class represent a broad spectrum within the church population in general. The class is multi-generational; it captures the various economic strata within the church; and it is representative of the male and female ratio within the church population. Furthermore, the class utilizes a significant number of teachers who rotate teaching assignments. This is important because it allowed the class participants to engage in various teaching styles of facilitating class discussion. The average attendance of the Adult Sunday School class was approximately forty to fifty persons.

A participant sheet was developed for the First Baptist Church Adult Sunday School class. The participant sheet invited persons to participate in a study that would last approximately six to eight weeks. Criteria for participation included attendance at both Sunday worship and Adult Sunday School class and a willingness to provide feedback. In late April 2012, the participation sheet was handed to the Adult Sunday School teacher to disseminate among the participants in the Adult Sunday School class. Participants were chosen solely based on the person's willingness to participate by signing up. Each member of the Adult Sunday School class retained an equal chance of being a part of the project study group. The goal of the project required a consistent pool of subjects who would most likely be exposed to the entire project treatment period (both the preaching and teaching series). This is important to validate the claim of incorporating both the proclamation and teaching spheres of the Christian church's attempts to engender greater awareness and commitment to social justice concerns in the communities around the church.

Twenty-four persons from within the Adult Sunday School class committed to participate in this project. This represents a participant rate of 40 to 50% of the average class attendance. All Adult Sunday School participants maintained an equal chance of selection for the project treatment. Each participant made a self-determining decision to participate or not without any influence. Although the participant pool was limited to those who participated in the Adult Sunday School class, all maintained an equal chance of selection. The primary factor for using the Adult Sunday School class for the project

treatment was because it closely matched the demographics of the entire First Baptist Church congregation.

The twenty-four participants were randomly assigned to three groups: self-administered Survey, self-administered Questionnaire, and questionnaire administered during a phone Interview. The following random assignment procedure was used to randomly assign participants to the three groups. Participants were randomly assigned an alphabetical letter based solely on the order of signing the participation sheet. Scrabble™ letter tiles (A-X) were placed into a Scrabble™ bag. The Administrative Assistant of First Baptist Church randomly pulled a Scrabble™ letter tile from the bag. The first letter tile pulled was matched with the corresponding participant. The first letter tile pulled was assigned to the group receiving the Questionnaire. The second letter tile pulled was assigned to the group receiving a Survey. The third letter tile pulled was assigned to the group receiving an interview. The process repeats itself until all letter tiles have been pulled and all participants were assigned. Due to the number of participants, each treatment received eight participants.

Collection of Baseline Data

Data used for this project was collected in three ways: self-administered web-based Survey, self-administered web-based Questionnaire, and questionnaire administered during a phone Interview. One week prior to the beginning of the project's treatment (preaching and teaching instructional period), a pre-testing was conducted to

provide a baseline of participants' personal understanding, attitude, and values regarding biblical social justice, prophetic ministry, and prophetic practice. One group received a pre-treatment Survey to be completed online (anonymously) using the web-based Survey software SurveyMonkey[®]. A second group received a pre-treatment Questionnaire to be completed online (anonymously) using the web-based Survey software SurveyMonkey[®]. A third group was interviewed via telephone by one of the project's Context Associates. For this group, the Context Associate asked the interviewee the same pre-treatment Questionnaire questions; however, the interviewee was not given the opportunity to read or study the questions. These participants only heard them from the interviewer. The interviewer recorded the interviewee's response on a hardcopy of the Questionnaire. Thereafter, the interviewer (Context Associate) recorded the answers online using the web-based Questionnaire at the SurveyMonkey[®] site.

To randomly assign the seven interviewers to the eight participants assigned to the phone interview, the following procedure was used. Each interview participant was assigned a Scrabble[™] alphabetical letter (A-H) based upon the alphabetical order of last names. Scrabble letter tiles were placed into a scrabble bag. Each participating Context Associate pulled a tile from the Scrabble bag to determine which participants he/she was to interview. The Context Associate interviewed the participant assigned to the corresponding Scrabble letter tile. Since there were eight participants and only seven Context Associates, one Context Associate selected two letter tiles and interviewed two interview participants.

With the assistance of The Context Associates assisted in the creation of a 30-item Survey and 30-item Questionnaire. The one-on-one telephone interviews used the questions from the same 30-item Questionnaire. Data was collected for the self-administered Survey and Questionnaire via the SurveyMonkey® web-based online Survey site. Context associates conducted all one-on-one telephone interviews and collected the SurveyMonkey® web-based online survey data.

Since twenty-four persons agreed to participate in the project, eight were randomly assigned to each of the groups. Self-administered Survey and Questionnaires were converted to electronic format and transferred to the SurveyMonkey® web site (www.surveymonkey.com). All Adult Sunday School participants chosen to complete a Survey or Questionnaire received instructions via an e-mail correspondence with specific instructions on how to access the Survey or Questionnaire online at SurveyMonkey®. The initial e-mail, sent to each individual, contained the following:

- a personal thank you for participating;
- the description of the purpose of the study,
- expectations of participants regarding attending the intervention and completing the assigned pre- and post instruments,
- timelines for completion of instruments, and
- a direct link to access and complete the required Survey or Questionnaire on the SurveyMonkey® web site.

The e-mails were sent within one week of the expected start of the project treatment (sermon series and Adult Sunday School lessons). Separate e-mails to interview

participants were sent by the Context Associate to arrange for the administration of the questionnaire Interview by telephone. See Appendix B for sample letters sent to participants and Context Associates. All pre-assessments (Pre-Survey, Pre-Questionnaire, and Pre-Interviews) were required to be completed prior to June 3, 2012. See Appendix C for the Pre-Survey and Appendix D for the Pre-Questionnaire in the SurveyMonkey[®] format.

Implementation of the Intervention

The project spanned a 10-week treatment period (May 21– July 27, 2012); however, the preaching instructional time covered four Sundays during the months of June and July 2012. The delivery of the project sermons occurred during the regularly scheduled 8:00A.M. and 11:00A.M. worship services conducted at First Baptist Church.

The senior pastor preached sermons (proclamation) that highlighted the church's social justice character and prophetic witness through the words and actions of the eighth-century Hebrew prophets and Jesus the Christ. In order for results to remain unbiased, the delivery of the sermons followed a typical preaching pattern or rotation of sermon topics and series within the congregation. One sermon which stood apart was delivered during the Sunday, June 03, 2012, regularly scheduled worship services. The remaining three sermons was delivered as a three-part series during the last Sunday in June (June 24, 2012) and the first two Sundays in July 2012 (July 01, 2012 and July 08, 2012). Table 1 summarizes the dates, titles, and scripture lesson for the series. See Appendix E for a copy of the treatment sermons.

Table 1. Sunday sermons concerning social justice and the church response

Date	Title	Scripture Lesson
June 03, 2012	What is the Proper Response?	Psalms 145:17-146 and Luke 4:14-21
Three Part Series: Pursuing Social Justice:		
June 24, 2012	From Crowd to Community	Micah 6:1-8 and Mark 6:30-44
July 01, 2012	From Pride to Perseverance	Isaiah 58:6-7 and Luke 18:1-8
July 08, 2012	From Anger to Action	Amos 5:4-24 and Luke 4:1-21

In tandem with the sermonic treatment period, the Adult Sunday School program in First Baptist Church taught a series of lessons on God's social justice during the entire month of June 2012. The lessons follow the scriptural theme of social justice in the Old and New Testaments that demonstrate the individual Christian's responsibility to social justice. The goal of the Sunday school instructors was to guide the class on the quest for a Christ-filled and prophetic aspect to their salvation and participation in the body of Christ. Four regular Adult Sunday School instructors taught the prepared lessons for the project. Each instructor taught one lesson in the curriculum (the goal was to minimize any distortion of any particular instructor's strength or weakness of presentation, and allow greater deference to the biblical texts and curriculum).

To allow for adequate preparation, each Adult Sunday School instructor received his or her particular Sunday school lesson at least one week in advance of the scheduled teaching moment. This provided the facilitator time for adequate instructional preparation. The teaching focus group was limited to the Adult Sunday School class. The goal was to create a pool of Adult Sunday School participants who were regular attendees in Sunday worship and Sunday school and, therefore, more likely to be present for a

significant portion of the project treatment period. The Adult Sunday School instructional period covers the four consecutive Sundays in the month of June 2012. Table 2 displays the dates, titles, and scripture lesson of the Adult Sunday School curriculum.

Table 2. Adult Sunday School Curriculum

Date	Title	Scripture Lesson
June 03, 2012	Rules for Just Living: Social Responsibility	Exodus 23:1-9
June 10, 2012	Acting on a Widow's Behalf: Concern for the Helpless	2 Kings 8:1-6
July 17, 2012	Making Judicial Reforms: Believing the Prophets	2 Chronicles 19:4-11
July 24, 2012	Praise for God's Justice: A Song of Trust	Psalms 146:1-10

The Adult Sunday School lessons were grounded in the Adult Sunday School curriculum materials, *Sunday School Lesson*, published in 2011 by David C. Cook Publications. However, modifications were made by adding and deleting materials to fit the intended goals and purposes of the lessons. The project entails the full aspect of Christian Kerygmatic proclamation (preaching and teaching). Christian Education learning and Sunday preaching are the main sources of discipleship training for the project. Learning in classrooms and learning that happens during the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus the Christ are both forms of pedagogy that can aid the Christian's understanding beyond the classrooms and pews and become experiences through which one's practical theology becomes normative.

Teaching and learning become rich opportunities for engagement, while discovering the connection between the biblical scriptures and the sermonic proclamation. Preaching occurs in the common context of worship. The purpose and objective in the preaching moment is to illuminate the truth of God's Word. The truth and

Christian Kerygma of the proclamation creates an atmosphere and seedbed for nurturing, affirming, and renewing a commitment to God through an active and observable faith response of collaborative ministry in the name of Jesus the Christ. Formal instructional learning that is collaborative may encourage the participant to wrestle with preconceptions of scriptural truths and gain an expanded purview of practical application in everyday living. See Appendix F for a copy of the Sunday School instructional materials.

Collection of Post Intervention Data

One month following the conclusion of the treatment period of sermons and curriculum, a follow-up e-mail was sent to all participants and participant groups requesting the completion of a post-Survey, post-Questionnaire, or post phone Interview. Post-questionnaire responses allowed participants to note the frequency of their Sunday service attendance (worship and Sunday school) during the project's treatment period. Each participant group (Survey, Questionnaire, and Phone Interview) again received the same instruments (Survey, Questionnaire, or Interview). Phone interviews were conducted by the same interviewers who conducted the baseline interviews. Interviewers recorded the responses of the same participants. Post-responses were sought one full month following the treatment period. The goal of the post treatment responses was to gauge any changes in biblical understanding and attitudinal willingness to increase participation in social justice advocacy and action through First Baptist Church rather

than capture ‘knee jerk’ responses. The post treatment phone interviews were designed to gauge the responses of participants who had adequate time to digest new biblical learning and formulate opinions. Opinions formulated over time have a better chance of remaining consistent than immediate reactions. The project goal was to validate a need for a prophetic witness in preaching and teaching in the Black church to raise the individual Christian and congregational internal value of social justice and a realistic praxis. Once the goal was achieved, it could manifest itself in an increased desire of individual Christians to participate in social justice ministries and endeavors of First Baptist Church (e.g. V.O.I.C.E., social justice programs of the church, or new ministry possibilities).

Table three outlines the project timelines including dates for target activities.

Table 3. Project Timeline

Date	Target
May 2012	Draft of pre-survey and pre-questionnaire Completion of documents on the online survey website SurveyMonkey®.
May 13, 2012	Adult Sunday School attendees voluntarily participate in a project by completing an online survey, questionnaire, or interview. The participants are to keep their normal Sunday attendance routine of worship services and Sunday school during the months of June and July 2012. Participants provide a name, contact telephone number, and e-mail address.
May 28, 2012	SurveyMonkey® online survey and questionnaire are completed and ready for access by participants Project participants and Context Associates are randomly assigned to a pre-survey, questionnaire, or interview
May 30, 2012	Project participants and Context Associates are sent e-mail or telephoned to complete their designated survey, questionnaire, or interview before Sunday, June 03, 2012.
June 03, 2012	Project Sermon—What is the Proper Response? Psalm 145:17-146 and Luke 4:14-21 Sunday school lesson—Rules for Just Living: Social Responsibility.

Date	Target
	Scripture Lesson: Exodus 23:1-9
June 10, 2012	Sunday school lesson—Acting on a Widow's Behalf: Concern for the Helpless. Scripture Lesson: 2 Kings 8:1-6
June 17, 2012	Sunday school lesson—Making Judicial Reforms: Believing the Prophets. Scripture Lesson: 2 Chronicles 19:4-11
June 24, 2012	Project Sermon—From Crowd to Community. Micah 6:1-8 and Mark 6:30-44
June 24, 2012	Sunday school lesson—Praise for God's Justice: A Song of Trust. Scripture Lesson: Psalm 146:1-10
July 01, 2012	Project Sermon—From Pride to Perseverance. Isaiah 58:6-7 and Luke 18:1-18
July 08, 2012	Project Sermon—From Anger to Action. Amos 5:4-24 and Luke 4:1-21
July 30-August, 6, 2012	Post-Survey, Questionnaire, and Interviews completed and ready for access by Context Associates via the SurveyMonkey® website
August 2012	SurveyMonkey® data compiled into of graphs and charts by Context Associates and displayed in aggregate ; all respondent survey and questionnaire responses remain anonymous; follow-up with Context Associates to discuss project results and implications for project conclusion

The project incorporates a Christian Kerygma that involves Sunday sermon instruction from the Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church through a series of sermons (four) that address scriptural support for social justice practices by the individual Christian and unified church body. The presentation of the sermons occurred during the months of June and July 2012. Working in tandem with the series of sermons on Social Justice, is the presentation of a four-part Adult Sunday School curriculum entitled God's Justice: Defined, Enacted, Promised. Lessons focus upon issues of social responsibility, concern for the helpless, believing the prophets, and a song of trust. The regularly assigned clusters of Christian Education Adult Sunday School instructors facilitate/teach

the lessons. The general audience of the preaching instruction is the entire Sunday worship congregation. The general audience for the Sunday school instruction is the regular attendees of the Adult Sunday School class.

Analysis of Data

The following data was analyzed and will be summarized in this section:

- responses on the electronic pre- and post Surveys,
- responses on the electronic pre- and post Questionnaires,
- responses to the pre-and post telephone questionnaire.

Analysis of the responses to the Surveys and Questionnaires was generated by SurveyMonkey[®]. The Context Associate responsible for the electronic data presented the results generated by SurveyMonkey.[®] The Context Associates also retrieved the responses to the one-on-one phone interviews.

A Context Associate generated frequencies tables of the Pre and Post Questionnaire results using the SurveyMonkey[®] software. Only nine of the fifteen persons who participated in the electronic pre-Questionnaire measures (self-administered on SurveyMonkey[®] and via phone interview) also completed the post-Questionnaire. All eight persons who participated in the electronic pre-Survey measures (self-administered on SurveyMonkey[®]) also completed the post Survey. In an effort to measure whether individual attitudes changed after receiving the intervention, data was used only from participants who completed both the pre and post instruments.

No identifying information (e.g., name, social security number, or date of birth) was collected on the instruments that would allow anyone to identify any of the participants. However, there was general information to link participant responses to one another, such as the interviewer's computer IP address, participant demographics (i.e., gender, age range, marital status, employment status, education level, income range, and race/ethnicity), and length of church attendance. These data elements were used to match participants in the pre-Questionnaire to participants in the post Questionnaire.

The post Questionnaire captured the frequency of the participants attendance in Sunday worship and Adult Sunday School during the treatment periods. The majority of the nine respondents attended, on average, 88% of the Adult Sunday School classes during the treatment period. Furthermore, the majority of the nine respondents attended, on average, 94% of the Sunday Worship services during the treatment period. See G for summary data generated by SurveyMonkey® for the pre and post Surveys.

This section provides a brief description of participants' change from pre- to post intervention on each of the questions they responded to. The first category of questions concerns a number of tasks the local church could perform. It asks respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the task statements:

- Question 1: Provide worship that deepens members experience with God.

There was a slight increase in the number of persons who declared they were satisfied with the emphasis given in this category following the treatment period.

- Question 2: Share the good news of the Gospel. There was a solid increase in the number of persons who declared they were satisfied with the emphasis given in this category following the treatment period.
- Question 3: Engage in acts of charity and service for persons in need. There was a slight increase in the number of persons who declared they wanted to see more emphasis given in this category following the treatment period.
- Question 4: Sermons and teachings with biblical support. There was no change in the number of persons who declared, either they wanted to see more emphasis (two) or they were generally satisfied with the emphasis given (seven) in this category following the treatment period.
- Question 5: The church taking a more activist role. There was a solid decrease in the number of persons concerning the church staying out of an activist role on the political, social, and economic issues of the day. The pre-treatment included two persons. The post-treatment saw the number go down to zero. Furthermore, the number of participants wanting to see more emphasis on this topic increased by a factor of one. Only one respondent indicated too much emphasis was given on this topic.

The second category of questions concern the respondent's personal involvement and/or opinion:

- Question 6: Last participated in community outreach ministry program. There was a significant increase in the number of persons participating in a

community outreach program, following the treatment period. There was a 100% participation rate following the treatment period.

- Question 7: Last participated in social justice program or action. There was a slight decrease in the number of persons declaring they never participating in a social justice program or action following the treatment period. There was a slight increase in the number of persons declaring they last participated in a social justice program or action more than a year ago.
- Question 8: Last participated in a fellowship action. There was no change in responses following the treatment period. Nearly all respondents (eight) had participated in a fellowship action within the last few months.
- Question 9: Last participated in a missions event. There was a solid decrease in the number of persons indicating they have not participated in a missions event within the last few months. Three respondents, post-treatment, indicated never having participated in a mission event.

The third category, which includes a single question, concerns the church's involvement in outreach and social justice. There are multiple responses requested.

Question 10: Concerning a church's involvement in outreach and social justice:

- Shows compassion to persons in need. One-hundred percent of the respondents answered in the affirmative in the pre and post treatment Questionnaires.
- Helps to make society more just. There was no change in responses following the treatment period. Nearly all respondents (eight) believe it is important to

make society more just. Only one respondent believes it is somewhat important.

- Is the prophetic work of the church. There was a slight increase in the number of persons indicating the importance of performing the prophetic work of the church. There was a slight decrease in the number of persons indicating it is somewhat important.
- Is a part of the Black Church history and tradition. There was no change in respondent answers following the treatment. Nearly all respondents (seven) believe outreach and social justice are a part of the Black Church history and tradition. Only two respondents find it somewhat important, but no respondents found it to be unimportant.
- Is preached and taught in my church. There was no change in respondent answers following the treatment. Nearly all respondents (eight) believe outreach and social justice is an important matter to be preached and taught at First Baptist Church. Only one respondent found it somewhat important, but no respondents found it to be unimportant.
- Is being true to the Christian faith. Prior to the treatment series, all respondents answered in the affirmative, that outreach and social justice are important to being true to the Christian faith. Following the treatment, only one respondent found it to be somewhat important.

The fourth category of questions concern the respondent's personal reasons for a lack of involvement in outreach and/or social justice opportunities, as well as capturing personal views of the local church.

- Question 11: Reason not involved in Church outreach and/or social justice.
Respondents were nearly split in their reasons. Nearly half indicated being actively involved. Another half indicated being too busy with activities outside of church.
- Question 12: Concerning what best describes the church.
 - Traditional. There was a slight increase (by a factor of one), following the treatment period, used to describe the church as traditional.
 - Contemporary. There was a slight increase (by a factor of one), following the treatment period, used to describe the church as contemporary.
 - Agent for social change. There was a solid increase in the number of respondents (by a factor of two) indicating this best describes our church.
 - Evangelistic. There was a slight increase in the number of respondents (by a factor of one) indicating this best describes our church.
 - Missions minded. There was a solid increase in the number of respondents (by a factor of two) indicating this best describes our church. Following the treatment, all respondents answered in the affirmative.
 - Compassion/Caring. There was no change following the treatment. All respondents believe the church is compassionate and caring.
- Question 13: Identifies the priority the congregation places on church efforts.

- Outreach to non-members. There was a slight increase in the number of persons, following the treatment period, indicating an emphasis of social justice in the local community.
- Social Justice. There was a solid increase in the number of persons, following the treatment period, indicating an emphasis of social justice in local community.
- Spreading the Gospel. There was a significant increase in the number of persons indicating an emphasis of social justice in local community.
- Welcoming diversity. There was a slight increase in the number of persons indicating a higher frequency in outreach to non-members.
- Emergency assistance. There was no change following the treatment period. Nearly all respondents indicate a high priority in assistance to non-members.
- Networking. There was a solid change in the number of persons indicating this as a high priority of outreach to non-members. A slight decrease in the number of persons believed networking is not a priority to social justice in local community.
- Question 14: Identifies how the respondent best describes their belief of the statement in regards to the church's role.
 - Help save souls. There was no change following the treatment period. All respondents agree it is a role of the church.

- Responsibility to the needy. There was a solid increase in the number of persons, following the treatment period, indicating agreement this is a role of the church. Post treatment registered all respondents agreeing.
- Focus only on faith. Half of respondent agreed or somewhat agreed with this focus on faith alone. Half somewhat disagreed or disagreed with the focus being solely on faith.
- Promote God's justice. Nearly all respondents, following the treatment period, agree it is the church's role to promote God's justice.
- Social justice is important to church teachings. The number of respondents agreeing with this statement remained unchanged following treatment. The majority agree with the statement. One respondent moved from undecided to disagreeing.

The fifth category of questions concerns the respondent's time of church attendance and church involvement.

- Question 15: Time attended church. Respondents were nearly evenly divided concerning the various categories identifying the respondent's tenure at First Baptist Church. Three respondents have attended three to five years, three respondents have attended six to ten years, and three respondents have attended sixteen or more years. Only two respondents indicated attending First Baptist Church for one to two years.

- Question 16: Involvement in the congregation. There was a slight increase in the number of persons indicating their church involvement remained the same. One respondent indicated a slight decrease.
- Question 17: How often attend Christian Education classes. There was a slight increase in the number of persons indicating a once-a-week frequency.
- Question 18: Number of church ministries involved in. There was nearly no change following the treatment period. There was a slight increase noted in the number of persons involved in at least one ministry.
- Question 19: Persons or families invited as guest or to join. There was nearly no change following the treatment period. There was a slight decrease in the number of persons who indicated inviting no one to church. The remainder respondents are actively inviting persons to First Baptist Church.
- Question 20: Why remained involved in church. The post treatment responses showed positive responses based upon two categories not listed in the pre-treatment responses. Those categories for the most important reason for remaining involved in First Baptist Church include “Church social ministry/community outreach,” and Church’s theological or religious orientation.

The fifth category of questions concerns demographics of the respondents.

Question 21-28 capture demographic information concerning the respondent. Data collected shows an equal spread of respondents concerning age and gender. The majority of respondents were married with children in the household and employed full time. The

level of formal education was evenly split between secondary, some college, and college degree. Nearly all of the respondents were Black and earned income classifying them economically as middle class.

Question 29 surveyed service attendance. All of the respondents in the post treatment responses indicated they attend both Sunday School and Worship Service. This is a slight improvement over the pre-test responses, where one individual indicated attending worship services only.

Pre and Post Survey Analysis of Data

A Context Associate generated an analysis report of the self-administered Survey (pre and post) using SurveyMonkey[®]. All participants completed the pre- and post online Survey. As with the Questionnaire, no identifying information (e.g., name, social security number, or date of birth) was collected in the Questionnaire that would allow anyone to identify any of the participants.

The post Survey captured the frequency of the participants attendance in Sunday Worship and in Sunday School during the treatment periods. All of the respondents attended all Sunday Worship services during the treatment period. Nearly all of the eight respondents attended the Adult Sunday School class during the treatment period (an average of 92%). See Appendix G for the frequency table and other output generated by Survey SurveyMonkey[®] data for the survey.

Scenarios

The Survey presented three Scenarios of potential community engagement and asked the respondents questions regarding their opinion of “What should be the proper response of the church?” It asks respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the church response statements.

Scenario One—Limited English Skills: presents a scenario of the church working in partnership with the local community to assist the immigrant population. The question is whether the church should offer assistance only as a last resort. There was a significant increase concerning perceptions. Pre-treatment responses showed 50% either neutral or agreeing with a last resort only response. However, post treatment responses showed nearly 88% either somewhat disagreeing or disagreeing with the last resort scenario.

Furthermore, there was a slight increase in believing the church has a responsibility to help and not leave matters simply to State government. A slight post treatment increase was captured in the number of respondents disagreeing with the statement that “The church shouldn’t take on many social issues.” The percentage rose from 75% to nearly 88%. The same increase percentage is true concerning the number of post treatment respondents agreeing that social justice demands the church offer space and love.

Scenario Two—High Costs of Medications: presents a scenario of the church participating in community organizing. The question is whether the church should participate in community organizing efforts to address ills within the local community. The pre and post treatment percentages remained the same. Nearly a two-thirds of

respondents agree with the statement of the church helping a little but not leading. The remaining third disagree. In fact, nearly all respondents believe the church should not leave it up to individuals regarding community organizing participation. This held true as well regarding whether community organizing was a responsibility of the local church. The post treatment survey results showed a stronger disagreement with the attitude of the church remaining out of politics. There was also a slight increase showing a stronger agreement with the church participating and leading in social justice demands.

Scenario Three—Affordable Housing and Foreclosure Crisis; presents a scenario of the church's willingness to involve itself in helping to alleviate the housing crisis among its neighbors and neighborhoods with politicians and banks. The post treatment results show an increase in attitude regarding the church moving beyond stewardship efforts and helping persons in financial crisis. Although nearly all respondents do not believe the banking institutions are not to be trusted in solving the crisis, the majority also do not feel it is the obligation of the church to operate as a bank. Post treatment responses showed a slight increase (to near 100%) in the belief that social justice demands the church advocate for just policies by the banks and politicians.

Demographic Information

Question seventeen through thirty capture demographic information concerning the respondent. Data collected shows an equal spread of respondents concerning the number of years attending First Baptist Church (new to more than twenty years). Post Survey responses showed an increased level of congregational involvement over the past two years. Levels of attendance in Christian Education classes remain constant, with

nearly two-thirds reporting at least once-a-week attendance. There was also a slight increase in ministry involvement. Post treatment responses increased to 100%. There was no significant change in the level of membership inviting others to attend First Baptist Church; nearly all had indicated doing so at least once in the last twelve months. Church involvement remained consistent with respondents indicating importance of spiritual growth, leadership, and the presence of the Holy Spirit. A significant demographic was missing in both the pre and post survey respondents (the young adult age bracket). The majority of respondents were middle-aged. Three-quarters of the respondents were female, married with children in the household. A majority of the respondents hold full-time or part-time employment. Three-quarters of the respondents possess college or post graduate degrees. All of the respondents were Black and nearly all earned income classifying them economically as middle class or above.

Service Attendance

Question thirty one captures information on service attendance of respondents. All of the respondents in the pre and post treatment responses indicated they attend both Sunday School and Worship Service.

Outcome

Post Survey respondent answers show a positive increase in attitudinal change toward a more social justice engagement and praxis within the First Baptist Church after being exposed to the treatment (preaching and teaching series). The goal was for the First

Baptist Church congregation to increase its knowledge of biblical social justice and increase the engagement in community praxis of social justice concerns. The treatment produced an increase in respondent's awareness and willingness to engage in matters of social justice and community engagement (whether the treatment was the catalyst or an indirect catalyst). Since the preaching and teaching tenets of the Christian church are a co-dependent unit, there is a suspicion that the combination of the treatments (preaching and teaching) played a concerted reason for the success of the positive responses. Excluding one or the other could mostly likely have gained a lesser result.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

Previous research on this topic demonstrates a recent shift toward a phenomenon of limited Black church engagement in matters of social justice. The last few decades have seen a decline of involvement in ministries, programs, and social action efforts that seek to bring justice to those suffering oppression and/or ignoring by economic and political systems. Scholars have examined the role of Black congregations in initiating social action and social justice activities over the last one hundred years. Research shows that Black congregations, demographically, are significantly more likely to engage in community activism and social justice endeavors than other Christian congregations. Yet, there has been a noticeable decline, post-civil rights era, of such social action engagement of the Black church community in general. Although the Black church is more conservative in matters of morality, it has historically been the polar opposite concerning matters of politics and social justice.

This project advances the discussion of determining and testing some of the suspected factors that influence Black church social justice activism. The findings lend support to the argument of reclaiming the Black churches' prophetic voice for social justice and social action. The applied treatment of prophetic preaching combined with

teaching series gives a measure of support to the project's hypothesis that Black Christian congregations have the potential, through intentional prophetic leadership, to be significantly more informed, and consequently active, in matters of social justice and community engagement.

Project results indicate a small positive finding between the social justice characteristic of leadership (prophetic) and increased congregational social activism. The results indicate a relationship between biblical faith and biblical social justice, on the one hand, and opportunities of learning and practicing community engagement on the other. The project suggests that authentic prophetic leadership and intentional congregational training on the historical and biblical tenets of social justice can draw the Christian faith community into God's reality of social action.

Pastors and church leadership who wish to empower their congregations towards greater engagement in matters of social and economic justice in the twenty-first century would do well to prioritize prophetic preaching and teaching into the natural course of the local congregation's Christian discipleship. Leadership can use points of reference from both the Old and New Testaments of the Christian canon. However, reading the Bible is not enough. Pastors and lay leadership must work together to offer opportunities for the general congregation to hear the witness of the Bible and search for ways to interpret the timeless truths to the present Black church that result in relevant praxis—community organizing involvement in social justice.

Two functions of Christian ministry—the prophetic and pastoral—have unwittingly become two separate movements in the Black church. The twenty-first

century Black church can recapture, through scriptural support, the relationship between Christian faith and social justice praxis through practical community engagement and intentional lay leadership. This facilitates integration and empowerment in addressing and creating transformational change against socio-economic injustices in local communities.

Achieving systemic transformation with a recurrent manifestation of justice, righteousness, and social action must involve a communal response. It requires that each congregant be equipped with the prophetic tools (biblical and historical knowledge) to envision himself or herself as a component of God's system for social action in local community. It is the deliberate integration of moral and ethical interpretation of God's justice and practical application of the interpretation. It is this Christian hermeneutic vision of who we are and who we must become that is the groundwork of the Judeo-Christian proclamation. Pastoral leadership within the Black church must hear, engage, and accept the prophetic appeal to link proclamation and pedagogy to congregational praxis. The Black church continues to wrestle with the question of how to provoke practical manifestations of its prophetic core and witness toward social justice. It is the amalgamation of theological reflection and individual, as well as congregational, praxis.

The desired outcome of prophetic proclamation and teaching is not to simply inform, but to transform the Black church back into a preeminent and active participant in the social justice of God in local community. This is important since a significant portion of Black churches either is located within or in close proximity to communities in economic, political, and social decline and/or oppression. This transformation is best

recognized and utilized as a great awakening of congregational minds and hearts to engage in practical ministry. This is true praxis. Practical ministry allows the local congregation to bear attention to the dispossessed and abused among itself and into society at-large. It is ministry engaged at the intersection of relationship between humanity and divinity.

Since this research focuses on the Black church reengaging its social action roots, the project findings indicate a small level of success. Respondents' answers, excluding outliers, were generally in the range to indicate a positive treatment influence. Respondents' post-treatment responses were slightly or significantly, more in line with biblical social justice truths regarding engagement in addressing economic, governmental, and social problems that affect the church's surrounding community.

One of the project limitations to address in subsequent studies includes increasing the sample size. The project included a relatively small sample size of twenty-four. The sample size makes it difficult to generalize the findings to the entire congregation. However, the upside to this particular sample is that the demographics of the sample size were in line with the demographics of the entire congregation. The random assignment of the responding participants equally captured the age, economic, gender, and household demographics well. Furthermore, the fact that nearly a third of the participants assigned to the self-administered questionnaire did not submit a timely post-Questionnaire resulted in an even smaller sample size than originally recruited. Thus, it would be useful if future studies identified larger sample sizes along with methods to reduce attrition of participants before the end of the study.

This project suggests that the relationship between a congregant's praxis of social justice and congregational engagement appears to be encouraged at the leadership level. Influencing a congregation's engagement in social justice action requires engaging in a prophetic style of leadership rather than operating primarily in a pastoral style of leadership. Prophetic leadership is intentional in manifesting the witness of God in social action working in partnership and caring for those whom God loves. In contrast, pastoral leadership is intentional in manifesting the witness of God almost exclusively in the realm of soul salvation, without engagement in the economic, political, or social circumstances that can harshly affect a person's daily existence.

Results suggest that the Black church can still provide a measure of benefit to its surrounding community and to those living in less than ideal circumstances and economic realities. Results can be used to encourage Black churches with a theologically conservative outlook and evangelistic-only function to adopt a transformative approach that does not negate the salvific tenet, but makes it whole through addressing the prophetic tenet as a co-dependent reality. There is a large gulf dividing the ears and hearts of those in and with power and the voices of those crying out for justice and love. This gulf, in which lies the practical and delicate balance of justice, is a self-created chasm that poorly echoes the voices of the poor and powerless regarding their plight and efforts to speak truth to power.

Authentic prophetic preaching and teaching disturbs and disrupts the conventional wisdom of some Black churches to remain priestly in function alone. Prophetic action requires a long-term commitment. This will challenge some 'middle class' congregations

who have lived in relative convenience during the last few decades. The opportunity is ripe for pastoral leadership to reengage the congregation in the co-dependent missions of Christianity (prophetic and priestly) through its preaching and teaching ministries. The prophetic ministry of pastors is a vital characteristic of their role and identity.

This project has demonstrated, in a small way, that it is ill advised to disregard leadership characteristics and congregational activism. Church leadership that includes in its role and responsibilities engagement in mission of social justice heighten the chances of attracting larger numbers of Christian participants to organized efforts of social justice. Commitment to social action within pastoral leadership and congregational leaders can play a significant role in furthering congregants toward social justice action. Prophetic preaching and teaching must grow out of a sense (characteristic) of one's own beliefs and values. Congregations more actively involved in social justice programs and community engagement often have leadership with a history of exposure to, or involvement in, social justice actions. Such leaders are most likely more effective.

The project has also shown that church leadership development that addresses social action is rarely accidental, but often intentional. Church members are most likely to participate in a community organizing effort or call to social action when they are afforded opportunities to gain the requisite biblical knowledge and organizing skills necessary for effective engagement. First Baptist Church, through its Christian Education ministry, is continually launching new initiatives and leadership development through semi-annual leadership forums and training. Such opportunities for lay leadership may

significantly influence a church's likelihood of engaging in social justice action and programs.

Focusing upon the classical eighth-century Hebrew prophets in congregational preaching and teaching can inspire attitudinal changes in contemporary Christian praxis within the Black church. This is the case at First Baptist Church. Analysis of the project results show an overall advancing of the commitment of First Baptist Church as an informed and active agent for social justice within the Manassas and Prince William County, Virginia. Through this project, persons can be encouraged to once again, embrace the prophetic dimension to stand as a moral agent of God that sees and reacts to injustice within ministry dialogue, leadership training, and innovative application. It is the prophetic dimension that fosters First Baptist Church's actions in Manassas, Prince William County, and northern Virginia.

As worship and praise are not ends in themselves to the plan of the church, authenticity requires attention to the Black church's role of producing practical training programs that help manifest its witness toward social justice. This is possible if the church reengages the biblical writings and narratives that support the goal of social justice in local context. The church validates its prophetic witness toward God's social justice, as supported by Scripture, by raising its internal value of social justice within the practical mission, communal, and internal works of social justice within the individual First Baptist Church congregant and the entire congregation. One opportunity to expand the prophetic witness into the surrounding communities is by increasing membership

participation in social justice endeavors such as the community organizing efforts for political and social change of V.O.I.C.E.

Through prophetic preaching and teaching praxis, clergy and laity proclaim and engage congregational hearers to embrace a transformation of thought and action that translates theological viewpoints closer toward God's worldview of social justice (righteousness, love, and justice toward God and humanity). It involves the interpretation of Christian faith, as exemplified in the Christian Bible. Prophetic preaching and teaching praxis engages the hearers to avoid being a split personality in the practical theologies of their lives. One cannot separate body and soul between the priestly and prophetic, as one informs the other.

Through prophetic proclamation and teachings, the sermon and classroom aids the hearer in proper interpretation of the faith and moves the individual Christian and church body to engage in relevant tasks and ministries. Preaching and teaching the importance of a prophetic ministry not only informs the urgency of empowerment to defend against the struggles of life, but also to defend others in their struggle against injustice. Therefore, the preacher and congregation are engaged in both pastoral and prophetic offices when preaching and teaching. The sermon and Christian classroom are engagements in understanding the truth of the Bible and its implications for our actions and attitudes to what we read or hear in the news and word on the street in the local context.

It is not enough for Black church congregations to learn about the injustices in local community and worldwide. Prophetic Christianity, in proclamation and classroom education, impresses the need to lift up the biblical texts, especially the Hebrew prophets

and Jesus the Christ himself, by highlighting social justice themes and calls to social action by God's children. Such learning happens best in congregational community, not in isolation. Encouragement to congregations to collaborate with local community organizing efforts that suit the cause and prophetic call of the congregation is needed. Making social justice a part of discipleship training within the local congregation is required. Weaving biblical support for social action into the fabric of Christian Kerygma (preaching and teaching) and demonstrate its truth in daily Christian living is essential. Preaching and teaching justice is a core value of Christian proclamation, teaching doctrine, and praxis. Preaching and teaching present a necessary conjoining in application and practice; yoked as necessary within church discipleship. A fully functional church view of Christian Kerygma and discipleship must regard prophetic teaching and preaching as co-dependent in application within the local congregation. Both applications concern themselves with the experiences of individual and congregational comprehension and praxis of the prophetic truths of God and discipleship derived in both.

The project results demonstrate attitudinal changes that offer potential for attracting larger numbers of Christian participants within the Black church to participate in organized social justice actions. The classical eighth-century prophets and the Scriptures concerning Jesus the Christ offer relevant example of social justice as a revitalizing and inspiring resource for contemporary Christian proclamation and praxis within the Black church, in particular within First Baptist Church.

Project results offer a positive outlook to the thought that congregants who hold to a more exclusive evangelistic belief of church priority are less likely to be involved in

social action. In contrast, Christians who hold a balanced view of prophetic and priestly tenets are more likely to accept the biblical social justice tenets of the faith by supporting and/or engaging in social action endeavors in the future. In addition, Black church leadership that engages in prophetic preaching and teaching is more likely to attract and encourage an increase in social justice attitude and praxis within the local community.

This project encourages a re-awakening within the Black church to be encouraged to once again embrace its' prophetic dimension to stand as a moral agent of God that sees and reacts as God does to injustice. The manifestation is a greater understanding of social justice, ministry dialogue, and innovative application in local context.

This project shows, within the participant group, a raised and/or reengaged internal value of social justice within the practical mission and ministry of First Baptist Church. Practical outgrowths continue to manifest themselves within the congregation. Some of the positive reactions to the project have been increased participation in various ministry and program efforts within First Baptist Church.

The following examples are some, but not all, of the actions participated in by First Baptist Church participants:

- The Family Life ministry hosts various community festivals throughout the year. The number of persons volunteering to serve has seen a general increase.
- The Christian Education ministry has reorganized for greater impact and community praxis.
- Barnabas Bread Basket and Beacon Adult Literacy, the feeding and community service programs run during the week has grown. Barnabas Bread

Basket offers free hot meals to the public on Thursday afternoons, regardless of perceived need.

- One-on-one mentoring initiatives for the youth of the church and community has grown.
- The church's commitment to ministering at the local Manassas Nursing and Rehabilitation services now include in-depth preaching by all pastoral staff as a part of the visitation.
- Use of the church web site to expand the church's outreach and communication has paid off with a new and user-friendly website. Many first-time guests have made intentional mention of the website as a reason for the visitation.

Future implications of the project include expanding the instructional paradigm to include new instructional materials and pedagogical approaches that convey the biblical and practical theology of social justice to the youth/next generation in the Black Church. Effective leadership demands the church actively vision for ways to engage the youth in healthy Christian tenets of prophetic social justice. It is important to teach and practice the biblical demands of social justice at an early age. To do so, significantly reduces the chances of a congregation sidelining the prophetic ministry of the church for the exclusivity of the priestly ministry.

The Words of Scripture are still relevant to the Black Church:

Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.

Deuteronomy 4:9

The church continues to develop and re-launch new ministries in order to expand the footprint and ministry presence of First Baptist Church in community through communications, computers, culinary activities, family life, health and wellness, pastoral care, as well as step dance, praise dance, and mime. The church's missionary ministry has reorganized and expanded its ministry purpose and efforts globally. The ministry held their first-ever offsite weekend retreat. The congregation sends out multiple missionaries annually to serve in various capacities and on numerous continents. There is an increased outreach effort to the local jail and prison and homeless shelters in the area.

All of this represents activities intended to expand the church's footprint to serve those in and outside the confines of the First Baptist Church family. Every ministry within the church is strongly encouraged to have both internal and external ministry efforts. There are a broad range of programs and organizations in which First Baptist Church actively engages and plays a lead role. The church is a leader in a broad-based citizen's organization known as V.O.I.C.E. which is comprised of nearly fifty faith and non-profit organizations dedicated to making change on social justice issues such as affordable housing, dental care for low-income adults, and systematic immigration

reform regarding matters of process and administration. Current participation has doubled, although the numbers are still low.

In addition, First Baptist Church offers free weekly classroom space to a local non-profit organization known as BEACON for adult literacy. BEACON offers tuition-free classes for English as a second language, GED preparation, citizenship, basic literacy, and quarterly life-skills workshops. Internally, First Baptist Church administers an emergency assistance ministry that offers emergency financial assistance for qualified housing, food, transportation, and medical needs within the congregation and local community. The church has continued to increase the programs budget annually.

In addition to funding Barnabas Bread Basket, First Baptist Church provides major financial and pastoral support for feeding programs in Guyana, South America (Sophia Presbyterian Church) and Monrovia, Liberia, West Africa (Restoration Baptist Ministries Community Nutritional Program). With the Guyana, South America feeding program, families receive a monthly allotment of staples (rice, corn, beans, flour) to assist families in this impoverished community. While First Baptist Church provides monies for the purchase of food, local pastors and church leadership handle the monthly administration and distribution.

The Christian Education ministry of First Baptist Church has begun to seek a range of informational initiatives to reach all church ministries with monthly snippets of theological understandings as delineated in the Christian Scriptures. These efforts are designed to produce a teaching praxis that unifies the church under current theological teachings and provides opportunities for leadership and general membership to discover

and address practical application of such learning in the church body and the local communities surrounding it.

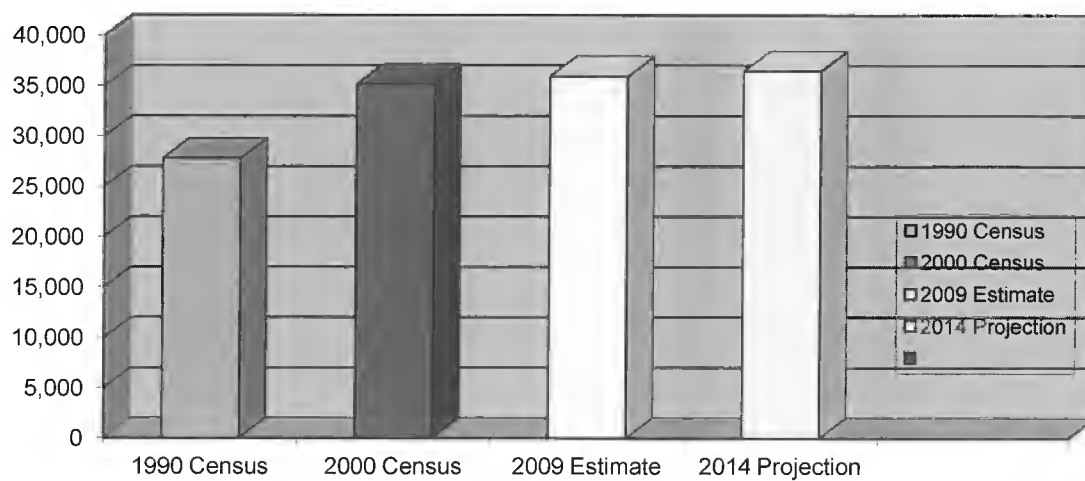
Preaching the importance of a prophetic ministry not only informed the urgency of empowerment to defend against the struggles of life, but also empowered others to defend the church's engagement in their struggle against injustice. Therefore, the Black church is engaged in both pastoral and prophetic offices. Understanding the truth that the Bible and its implications for our context, actions and attitudes affirm the power of prophetic discipleship in all aspects of church mission and ministry.

APPENDIX A

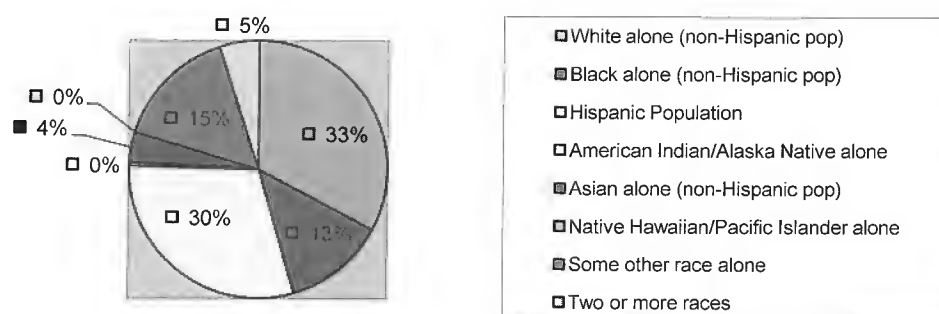
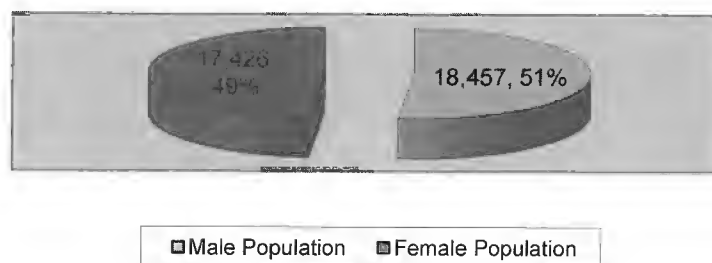
DEMOGRAPHICS: MANASSAS AND FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Table 1**Demographics of Manassas: Population Totals ¹**

Year	Total
2014 Projection	36,399
2009 Estimate	35,883
2000 Census	35,153
1990 Census	27,754

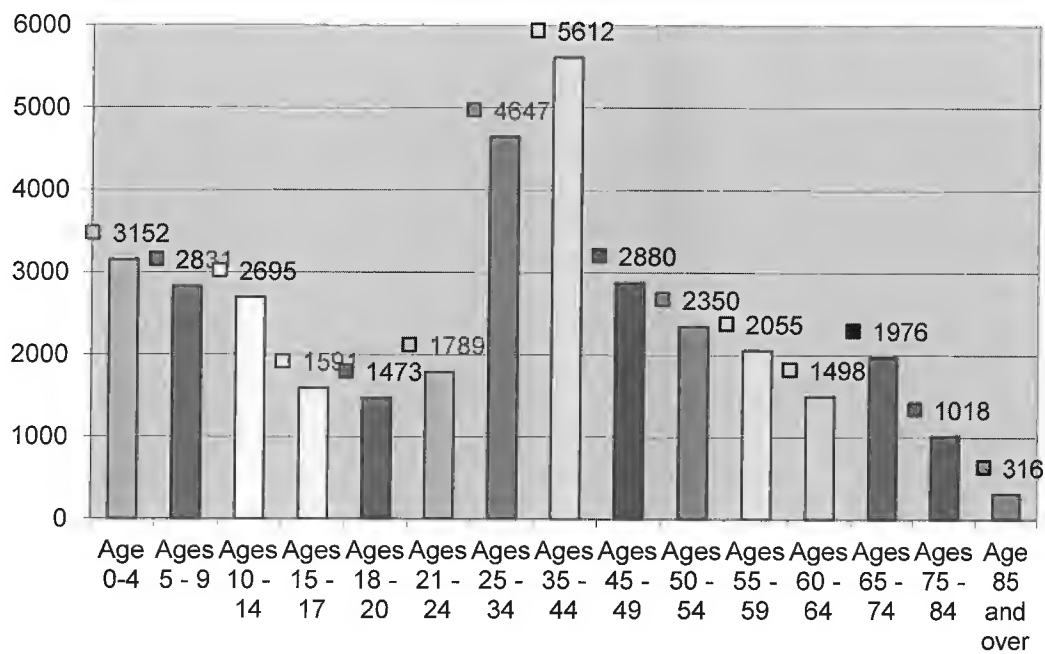


¹ City of Manassas, 2009 Key Demographics Report, (Manassas, VA: Office of Community Development, 2009).

Table 2Demographics of Manassas: Race and Ethnicity 2009 Estimate²**Table 3**Demographics of First Baptist Church of Manassas: Population by Gender 2009 Estimate³

² City of Manassas, 2009 Key Demographics Report, (Manassas, VA: Office of Community Development, 2009).

³ City of Manassas, 2009 Key Demographics Report, (Manassas, VA: Office of Community Development, 2009).

Table 4Demographics of Manassas: Population by Age 2009 Estimate⁴

⁴ City of Manassas, 2009 Key Demographics Report, (Manassas, VA: Office of Community Development, 2009).

Table 5Demographics of Manassas: Household Totals⁵

Year	Total
2014 Projection	12,007
2008 Estimate	11,885
2000 Census	11,757
1990 Census	9,414
Growth 2009—2014	1.03%
Growth 2000—2009	1.09%
Growth 1990—2000	24.89%

Households by Income⁶

Income in 2009 (Estimate)	#	%
Households	11,885	100.00%
Income Less than \$15,000	537	4.52%
Income \$15,000 - \$24,999	550	4.63%
Income \$25,000 - \$34,999	930	7.82%
Income \$35,000 - \$49,999	1399	11.77%
Income \$50,000 - \$74,999	2698	22.70%
Income \$75,000 - \$99,999	2029	17.07%
Income \$100,000 - \$149,999	2568	21.61%
Income \$150,000 - \$249,999	883	7.43%
Income \$250,000 - \$499,999	224	1.88%
Income \$500,000 or more	67	0.56%

2009 Est. Median Household Income: \$73,407

⁵ City of Manassas, 2009 Key Demographics Report, (Manassas, VA: Office of Community Development, 2009).

⁶ Ibid.

Table 6

Demographics of Manassas: 2009 Estimated Owner-Occupied
Housing Values⁷

Value	# of Units	% of Units
Value Less than \$20,000	88	1.07%
Value \$20,000 - \$39,999	27	0.33%
Value \$40,000 - \$59,999	0	0.00%
Value \$60,000 - \$79,999	17	0.21%
Value \$80,000 - \$99,999	15	0.18%
Value \$100,000 - \$149,999	725	8.79%
Value \$150,000 - \$199,999	1053	12.76%
Value \$200,000 - \$299,999	1976	23.95%
Value \$300,000 - \$399,999	2324	28.17%
Value \$400,000 - \$499,999	1324	16.05%
Value \$500,000 - \$749,999	554	6.72%
Value \$750,000 - \$999,999	99	1.20%
Value \$1,000,000 or more	48	0.58%

⁷ City of Manassas, 2009 Key Demographics Report, (Manassas, VA: Office of Community Development, 2009).

Table 7Demographics of Manassas: Employment Totals⁸

2009 Est. Civilian Employed Population Age 16+ by Class of Worker

Type of Worker	#	%
For-Profit Private Workers	13,367	70.42%
Non-Profit Private Workers	1,322	6.96%
Local Government Workers	1,807	9.52%
State Government Workers	312	1.64%
Federal Government Workers	1,333	7.02%
Self-Employed Workers	823	4.34%
Unpaid Family Workers	19	0.10%
Total	18,983	100.00%

- Demographics of Manassas: 2009 Est. Civilian Employed
Population Age 16+ by Occupation

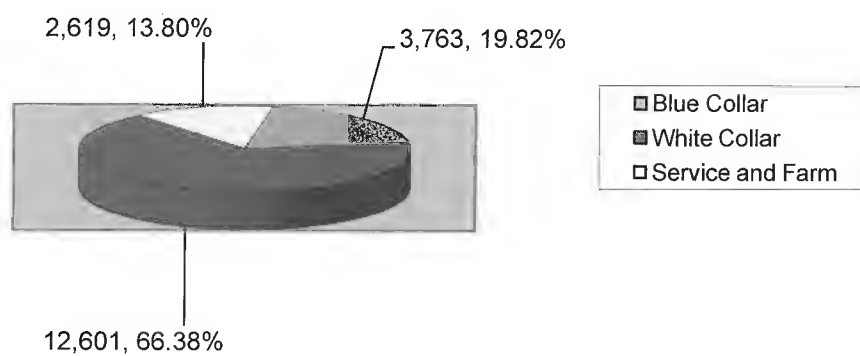
Occupation	#	%
Management, Business, and Financial Ops	3,123	16.45%
Professional and Related Occupations	4,328	22.80%
Service	2,595	13.67%
Sales and Office	5,159	27.18%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	15	0.08%
Construction, Extraction and Maintenance	2,210	11.64%
Production, Transportation, Material Moving	1,553	8.18%
Total	18,983	100.00%

⁸ City of Manassas, 2009 Key Demographics Report, (Manassas, VA: Office of Community Development, 2009).

Table 8

Demographics of Manassas: Employment Totals⁹ 2009
 Est. Civilian Employed Pop. Age 16⁺ by Occupation Classification

Classification	#	%
Blue Collar	3,763	19.82%
White Collar	12,601	66.38%
Service and Farm	2,619	13.80%
Total	18,983	100.00%

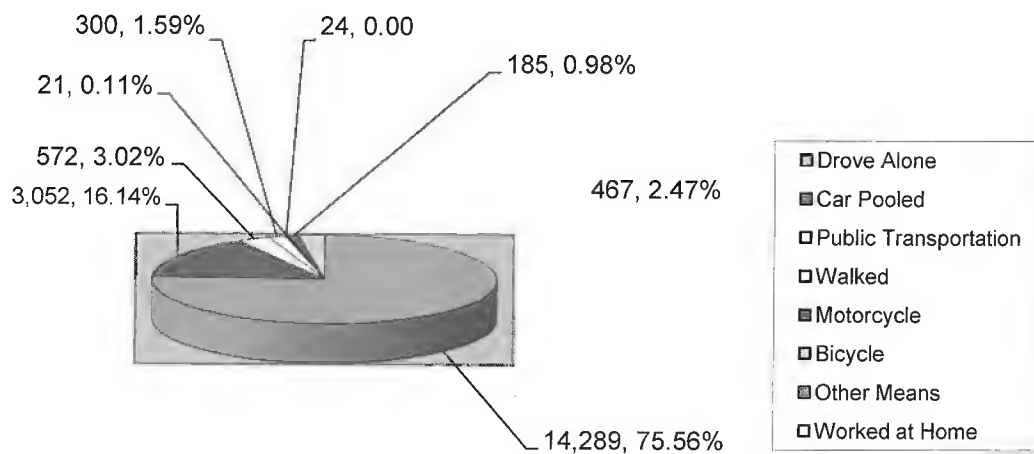


⁹ City of Manassas, 2009 Key Demographics Report, (Manassas, VA: Office of Community Development, 2009).

Table 9

Demographics of Manassas: Employment Totals¹⁰
 2009 Est. Civilian Employed Pop. Age 16+ - Transportation to Work

Mode of Transportation	#	%
Drove Alone	14,280	75.55%
Car Pooled	3,052	16.15%
Public Transportation	572	3.03%
Walked	300	1.59%
Motorcycle	24	0.13%
Bicycle	21	0.11%
Other Means	185	0.98%
Worked at Home	467	2.47%
Total	18,901	100.00%



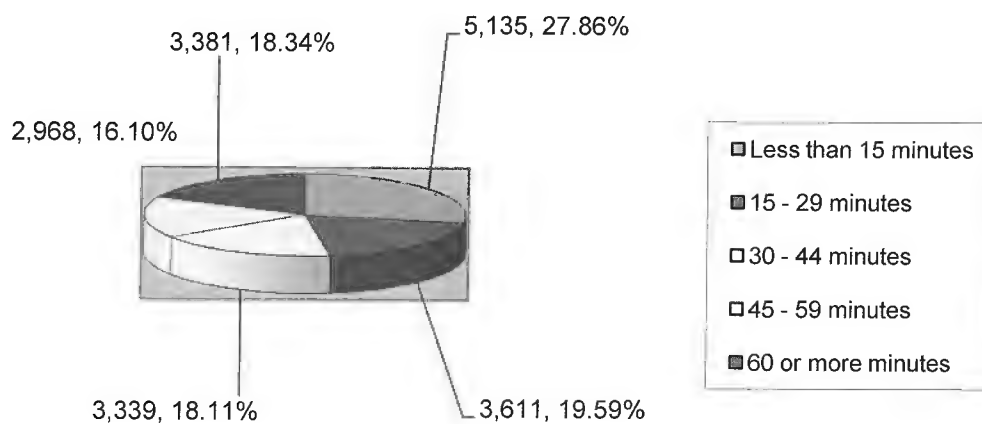
¹⁰ City of Manassas, 2009 Key Demographics Report, (Manassas, VA: Office of Community Development, 2009).

Table 10

Demographics of Manassas: Employment Totals¹¹
 2009 Est. Civilian Employed Pop. Age 16+ by Travel Time to Work

Travel Time	#	%
Less than 15 minutes	5,135	27.86%
15—29 minutes	3,611	19.59%
30—44 minutes	3,339	18.11%
45—59 minutes	2,968	16.10%
60 or more minutes	3,381	18.34%

Average Travel Time to Work: 36.09 minutes

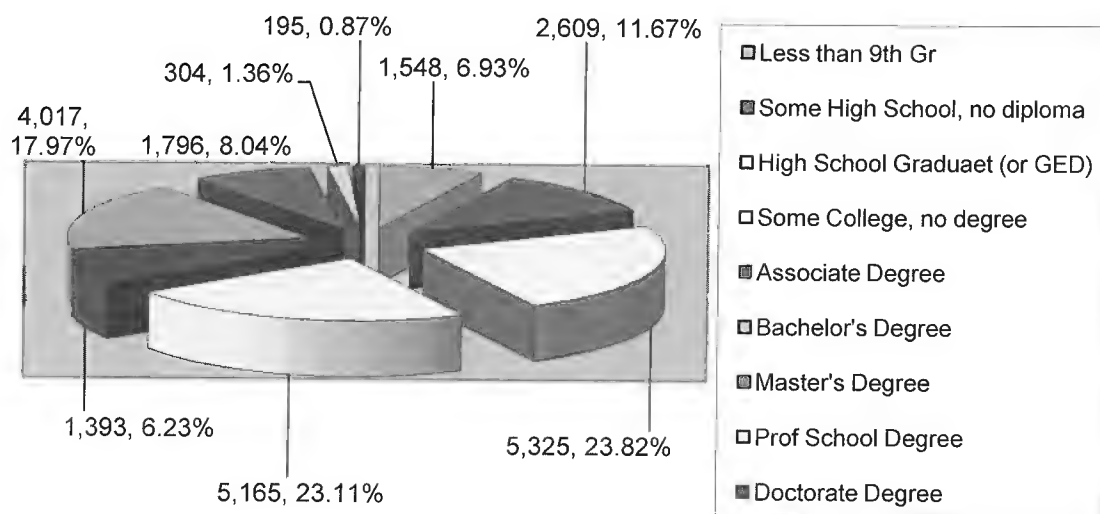


¹¹ City of Manassas, 2009 Key Demographics Report, (Manassas, VA: Office of Community Development, 2009).

Table 11**Demographics of Manassas: Education Totals¹²**

2009 Est. Civilian Employed Pop. Age 25+ by Education Attainment

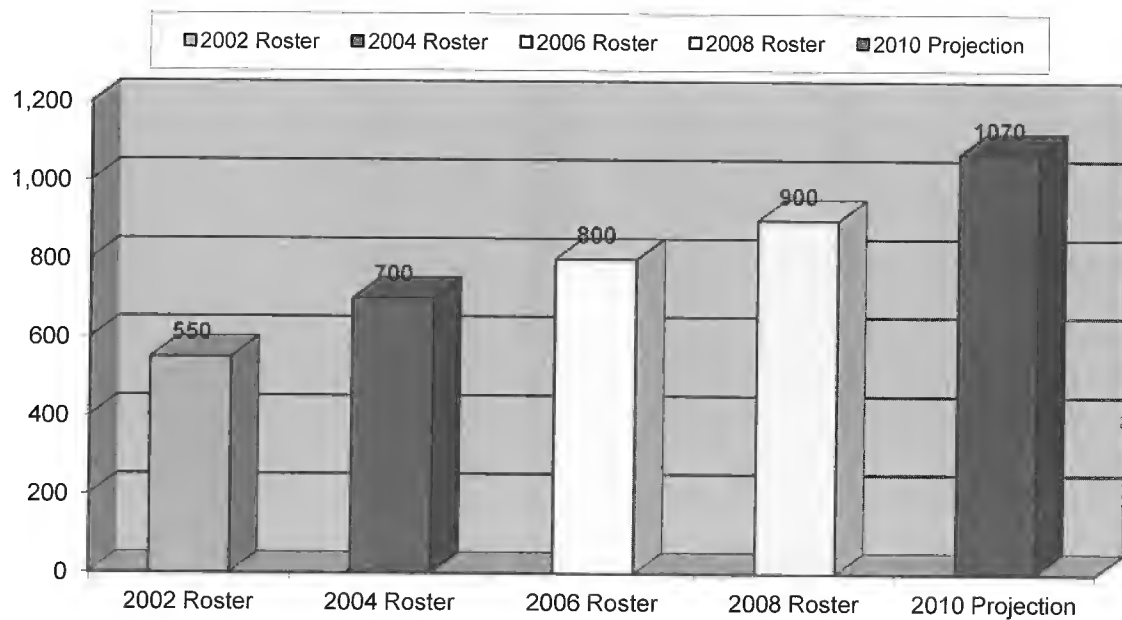
Education Level	#	%
Less than 9 th Grade	1,548	6.93%
Some High School, no diploma	2,609	11.67%
High School Graduate (or GED)	5,325	23.82%
Some College, no degree	5,165	23.11%
Associate Degree	1,393	6.23%
Bachelor's Degree	4,017	17.97%
Master's Degree	1,796	8.04%
Professional School Degree	304	1.36%
Doctorate Degree	195	0.87%
Total	22,352	100.00%



¹² City of Manassas, 2009 Key Demographics Report, (Manassas, VA: Office of Community Development, 2009).

Table 12
Demographics of First Baptist Church of Manassas: Population Totals¹³

Year	Total
2010 Projection	1070
2008 Roster	0900
2006 Roster	0800
2004 Roster	0700
2002 Roster	0550



¹³ Membership Roster of First Baptist Church of Manassas, January 2010

Table 13
Demographics of First Baptist Church of Manassas: Race and Ethnicity¹⁴
2010 Estimate

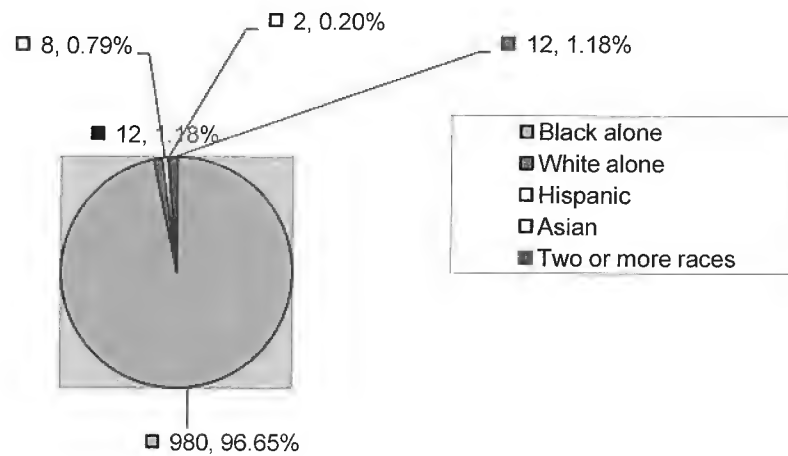
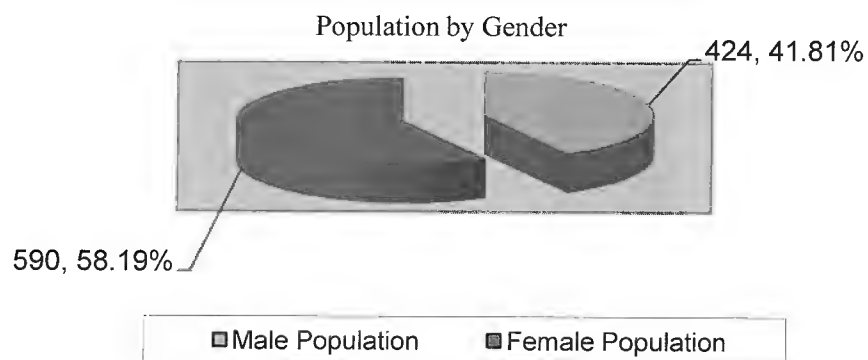
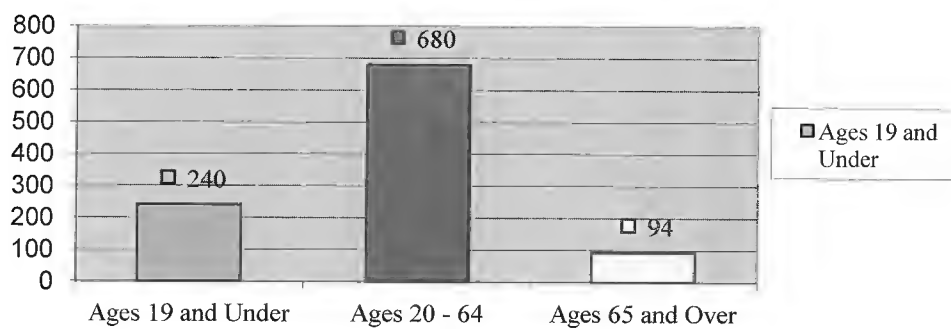
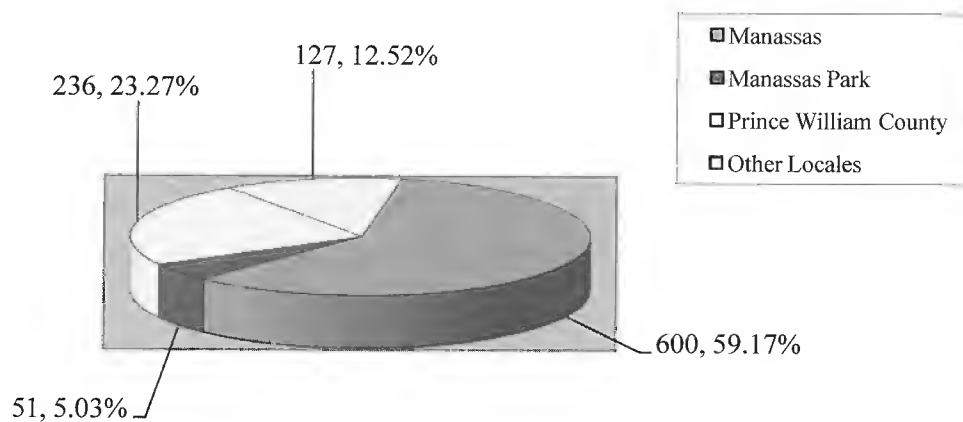


Table 14
Demographics of First Baptist Church of Manassas: 2010 Estimate
By Gender¹⁵



¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Table 15Demographics of First Baptist Church of Manassas: 2010 Estimate by Age¹⁶**Table 16**Demographics of First Baptist Church of Manassas: 2010 Estimate by Locale¹⁷¹⁶ Ibid.¹⁷ Ibid.

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE LETTERS: PARTICIPANTS AND CONTEXT ASSOCIATE

First Baptist Church of Manassas
Attention: Adult Sunday School Participant
 9258 Center Street
 Manassas, Virginia 20110

May 2012

Dear **Adult Sunday School Participant**,

I am a candidate for the Doctor of Ministry degree at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. I am conducting research under the supervision of [Faculty Mentors]. I am conducting research on the ***development of a model of ministry supporting Christian preaching and teaching that informs social justice practices in the Black Church***.^{*} The researcher believes there is a need to explore the question of social justice practices in the post-civil rights black church (21st century church). What is the current opinion concerning a biblical/historical value of social justice as a core witness of the church?

You are requested to **COMPLETE** the in-person or telephone **INTERVIEW** anytime **BEFORE** 8:00a.m., Sunday, June 3, 2012.

There are two phases to your participation in this project research. In the **first phase**, you (a *regular participant in the adult Sunday school class and worship services of FBC*) will be asked to take part in an opinion poll. Completion time is approximately **20 minutes**. In the **second phase** of the study, you will be asked to participate in a follow-up opinion poll in the later part of July 2012.

You have been randomly selected to take the INTERVIEW. You will be contacted by an FBC context associate [NAME HERE] to arrange and administer the interview either in-person or by telephone.

Participation is completely voluntary and your personal identity will remain anonymous. Your results will be entered unattached to you. You will not be personally identified in any report or publication based on this research. There are no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study.

If after receiving this correspondence, you have any questions or would like additional information about participating, please feel free to contact [author of study] at [telephone number] or via e-mail at [email address].

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received academic clearance through the faculty of the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio (www.united.edu).

I thank you in advance for your assistance in this research project.

Yours in Christ,

[Author Name]

Doctor of Ministry Candidate

United Theological Seminary

Dayton, Ohio

First Baptist Church of Manassas

Attention: Adult Sunday School Participant

9258 Center Street

Manassas, Virginia 20110

May 2012

Dear **Adult Sunday School Participant**,

I am a candidate for the Doctor of Ministry degree at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. I am conducting research under the supervision of [Faculty Mentors]. I am conducting research on the ***development of a model of ministry supporting Christian preaching and teaching that informs social justice practices in the Black Church***.^{*} The researcher believes there is a need to explore the question of social justice practices in the post-civil rights black church (21st century church). What is the current opinion concerning a biblical/historical value of social justice as a core witness of the church?

There are two phases to your participation in this project research. In the **first phase**, you (a *regular participant in the adult Sunday school class and worship services of FBC*) will be asked to complete an online opinion poll. Completion time is approximately **20 minutes**. In the **second phase** of the study, you will be asked to participate in a follow-up (post) opinion poll in the later part of July 2012.

You have been randomly selected to take the **QUESTIONNAIRE**. You may access the Questionnaire by clicking (or holding down the Ctrl key & clicking) the link. You may complete the **QUESTIONNAIRE** on any computer with internet <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/HVDC7V7PREQUEST> service; including at First Baptist Church (simply ask the office for the passcode to use the computers in the fellowship hall).

You are requested to **COMPLETE** the ***online Questionnaire*** anytime **BEFORE** 8:00a.m., Sunday, June 3, 2012.

Participation is completely voluntary and your personal identity will remain anonymous. Your results will be entered unattached to you. You will not be personally identified in any report or publication based on this research. There are no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study.

If after receiving this correspondence, you have any questions or would like additional information about participating, please feel free to contact [author of study] at [telephone number] or via e-mail at [email address].

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received academic clearance through the faculty of the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio (www.united.edu).

I thank you in advance for your assistance in this research project.

Yours in Christ,
[Author's Name]
 Doctor of Ministry Candidate
 United Theological Seminary
 Dayton, Ohio

First Baptist Church of Manassas
Attention: Adult Sunday School Participant
 9258 Center Street
 Manassas, Virginia 20110

May 2012

Dear **Adult Sunday School Participant**,

I am a candidate for the Doctor of Ministry degree at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. I am conducting research under the supervision of [Faculty Mentors]. I am conducting research on the ***development of a model of ministry supporting Christian preaching and teaching that informs social justice practices in the Black Church***.^{*} The researcher believes there is a need to explore the question of social justice practices in the post-civil rights black church (21st century church). What is the current opinion concerning a biblical/historical value of social justice as a core witness of the church?

There are two phases to your participation in this project research. In the **first phase**, you (a *regular participant in the adult Sunday school class and worship services of FBC*) will be asked to complete an online opinion poll. Completion time is approximately **20 minutes**. In the **second phase** of the study, you will be asked to participate in a follow-up opinion poll in the later part of July 2012.

You have been randomly selected to take the SURVEY. You may access the Survey by clicking (or holding down the Ctrl key & clicking) the link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/3VCCWSBPRESURVEY>. You may complete the SURVEY on any computer with internet service; including at First Baptist Church (simply ask the office for the passcode to use the computers in the fellowship hall).

Participation is completely voluntary and your personal identity will remain anonymous. Your results will be entered unattached to you. You will not be personally identified in any report or publication based on this research. There are no known or anticipated risks to

You are requested to COMPLETE the *online SURVEY* anytime BEFORE 8:00a.m., Sunday, June 3, 2012.

participation in this study.

If after receiving this correspondence, you have any questions or would like additional information about participating, please feel free to contact [author of study] at [telephone number] or via e-mail at [email address].

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received academic clearance through the faculty of the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio (www.united.edu).

I thank you in advance for your assistance in this research project.

Yours in Christ,
[Author Name]
Doctor of Ministry Candidate
United Theological Seminary
Dayton, Ohio

Monday, July 30, 2012; 5:05pm

URGENT!

Dear [Context Associate Name]:

Thank you for your continued prayers and willingness to help me complete this arduous but rewarding and insightful journey. I am seeking your assistance with this final phase of data collection by asking you to conduct the **Post-Questionnaire interview** with the same participant you contacted initially. You will still play a key role in administering the data collection tools, collecting all data and assisting with the data analysis. The **Post-Questionnaire** is attached to this email but the SurveyMonkey link is provided as well:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GKLTHQLPOSTQUES>. Once the interview is completed and each Context Associate has properly entered the responses for the interviewee's onto SurveyMonkey, please send, as soon as possible, an email confirmation of completion to pastor9258@fbcmanassas.org.

You have randomly been chosen to contact and interview FBC member [name and telephone contact number]. [Name of Participant] has agreed to participate. He has randomly been chosen to submit to an interview (in-person or via telephone).

You are requested to ***COMPLETE and RECORD the RESPONSES*** of the in-person or telephone ***Post-Questionnaire Interview*** ***NO LATER THAN Monday, August 6, 2012.***

Participation is completely voluntary and your personal identity and that of the interviewee will remain anonymous. You will not be personally identified in any report or publication based on this research. There are no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study.

I am honored by your desire to play an integral role in this process as we continue to move the Kingdom forward.

I will contact you today or tomorrow to confirm your receipt of this email and clarity of request.

Keith A. Savage
Doctor of Ministry Candidate
United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio

Monday, July 30, 2012; 4:50pm

URGENT!

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you for your continued prayers and willingness to help me complete this arduous but rewarding and insightful journey. I am seeking your assistance with this final phase of data collection by asking you to conduct a **Post-Questionnaire** (see link below). The designated link for those completing the **Post-Questionnaire** is as follows:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GKLTHQLPOSTQUES>.

You are requested to ***COMPLETE*** the online ***POST-Questionnaire*** ***NO LATER THAN***, Monday, August 6, 2012.

Participation is completely voluntary and your personal identity will remain anonymous. Your results will be entered unattached to you. You will not be personally identified in any report or publication based on this research. There are no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study.

If after receiving this correspondence, you have any questions or would like additional information about participating, please feel free to contact Pastor Keith Savage at 571-437-8250 or via e-mail at pastor9258@fbcmanassas.org. I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received academic clearance through the faculty of the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio (www.united.edu).

I am honored by your desire to play an integral role in this process (my doctoral studies project) as we continue to move the Kingdom forward through Faith. This is the **second phase** of the study.

I will contact you today or tomorrow to confirm your receipt of this email and clarity of request.

Yours in Christ,

Keith A. Savage, Senior Servant
Doctor of Ministry Candidate
United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio

Monday, July 30, 2012; 4:55pm

URGENT!

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you for your continued prayers and willingness to help me complete this arduous but rewarding and insightful journey. I am seeking your assistance with this final phase of data collection by asking you to conduct a **Post-Survey** (see link). The designated link for those completing the **Post-Survey** is as follows:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GK8VMCTPOSTSURV>

You are requested to **COMPLETE** the online ***POST-Survey*** **NO LATER THAN**, Monday, August 6, 2012.

Participation is completely voluntary and your personal identity will remain anonymous. Your results will be entered unattached to you. You will not be personally identified in any report or publication based on this research. There are no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study.

If after receiving this correspondence, you have any questions or would like additional information about participating, please feel free to contact Pastor Keith Savage at 571-437-8250 or via e-mail at pastor9258@fbcmanassas.org. I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received academic clearance through the faculty of the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio (www.united.edu).

I am honored by your desire to play an integral role in this process (my doctoral studies project) as we continue to move the Kingdom forward through Faith. This is the **second phase** of the study.

I will contact you today or tomorrow to confirm your receipt of this email and clarity of request.

Yours in Christ,

Keith A. Savage, Senior Servant
Doctor of Ministry Candidate
United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio

APPENDIX C

PRE AND POST SURVEYS

PRE-SURVEY- THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

1. SCENARIO ONE - LIMITED ENGLISH SKILLS

State-funded programs cannot meet the demand for English tutoring among the growing number of immigrants in our communities. Prince William County (which includes Manassas and Manassas Park) experienced a large percentage increase in the number of adults and children with limited English proficiency. Due to limited funds, only a small portion of those adults were able to enroll in state-funded English for Speakers of Other Language classes. A non-profit organization that offers such classes is in need of space to host English for Speakers of Other Language classes. They are reaching out to schools, churches, and businesses for space.

What do you believe should be the proper response of the church in this scenario?

For each statement below, please mark what best describes your belief.

1. The church should only help as a last resort.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Disagree

2. The church has a responsibility to help.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Disagree

3. The church is not the State; we must stick to our biblical mandate to save souls and praise God.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Disagree

PRE-SURVEY- THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

4. The church shouldn't take on many social issues.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

5. Social justice demands we offer space and love.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

2. SCENARIO TWO -- HIGH COST OF MEDICATIONS

The high cost of prescription drugs is one of the biggest issues facing individuals and families who stop into the offices of the Manassas or Prince William County free clinics. Those with diabetes and mental health problems are especially vulnerable, because without their medications their conditions can spiral downward fast, potentially resulting in job losses or prison and more expensive care later. Children with attention deficit disorder (ADD or ADHD) often are not permitted in school without their medications and parents must seek alternative childcare, which is expensive. Prince William County (which includes Manassas and Manassas Park) experienced an increase in the number of adults and children needing assistance with the high costs of medications, however the government is reluctant to offer up significant dollars to assist. The costs would be high. It wants to keep the citizens' taxes low and not put an undue burden on its businesses and homeowners. Although the members of the governing body are sympathetic to the circumstances of these persons, they do not feel the need to allocate significant dollars to the cause. Some non-profits are stepping up to the plate, but they can only do so much. A community organizing effort is underway to address the County Board of Supervisors and demand more monies for the clinics. First Baptist Church has been asked to participate and help plan and lead the action.

What do you believe should be the proper response of the church in this scenario?

For each statement below, please mark what BEST describes your belief.

6. The church should help a little but not lead.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

PRE-SURVEY: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

7. The church should leave it up to individuals.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

8. The church is not the State; that is not our responsibility.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

9. The church should stay out of politics. The Bible doesn't address this matter for the church.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

10. Social justice demands we participate and lead.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

3. SCENARIO THREE – AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND FORECLOSURE CRISIS

The wait for affordable housing through the Catholic Charities Housing Office (CCHO) has grown from less than 30 days in 2015 to at least 6-12 months in 2017. In the first quarter of 2017, CCHO received 176 applications for permanent housing in the City of Manassas, but only had nine openings. Recently, research has revealed that a significant number of the mortgage loans that banks offered customers between 2003 and 2015 were fraudulent or unethical. People of color were targeted and offered subprime loans at outrageous interest rates, even when some qualified for prime loan rates. Many

PRE-SURVEY- THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

were offered loans they did not qualify to obtain based on annual incomes. Some received modifications on their loans, but the bank foreclosed anyway. Others received modifications that increased their monthly mortgage payments. Nearly 50% of homeowners in Prince William County are "Underwater" (meaning they owe more on the home than its current value). The banks and politicians are reporting that the worse is over and things are getting back to normal. However, many of our neighbors are still struggling and facing foreclosures.

What do you believe should be the proper response of the church in this scenario?

For each statement below, please mark what BEST describes your belief.

11. The church should only preach and teach stewardship (fiscal responsibility).

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Disagree

12. Individuals are accountable for taking on too much debt and now must face their bad decisions.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Disagree

13. The church is not a bank, but should help its own members who may need a little/limited help.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Disagree

PRE-SURVEY-THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

14. The banks will handle it fairly; scripture tells us to only preach and teach the Gospel.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

15. Social justice demands the church advocate for just policies by the banks and politicians.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

4. YOUR CHURCH PARTICIPATION

Please select one answer only.

16. How long have you attended this church?

- ☐ One year or less
☐ 1-2 years
☐ 3-5 years
☐ 6-10 years
☐ 11-15 years
☐ 16-20 years
☐ more than 20 years

17. Has your involvement in the congregation increased, decreased, or remained about the same in the last two (2) years?

- ☐ Increased
☐ Decreased
☐ Remained the Same

PRE-SURVEY-THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

18. On average, about how many times a month do you attend Christian Education classes (Sunday School and/or Bible Study)?

- ☐ Once a week
☐ Twice a week
☐ Twice a month
☐ Once a month

Other (please specify)

19. How many church ministries are you involved in this church (including singing in the choir as one ministry)?

- ☐ None
☐ One
☐ Two
☐ Three
☐ Four or more

20. How many persons or families have you invited as guests or to join First Baptist Church in the past 12 months?

- ☐ None
☐ One
☐ Two
☐ Three
☐ Four or more

PRE-SURVEY: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

21. From the choices listed below, check the SINGLE, MOST IMPORTANT reason you have remained involved in your church (only one):

- ☐ Spiritual growth at the church
- ☐ Church's social/ministry/community outreach
- ☐ Church reaches non-Christians with the gospel
- ☐ Church is committed to promoting social justice
- ☐ Church's evangelistic/ministry program
- ☐ Church's denominational affiliation
- ☐ Presence of the Holy Spirit in the church
- ☐ Church is under the leadership of Jesus
- ☐ Opportunities to do ministry
- ☐ Church's theological or religious orientation

5. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please select only one response.

22. Which age bracket are you in?

- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 26-35
- ☐ 36-45
- ☐ 46-55
- ☐ 56-64
- ☐ 65 or above

23. Are you:

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

24. Are you:

- ☐ Unmarried, divorced, separated
- ☐ Single (never married)
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Widowed

PRE-SURVEY-THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**25. Employment Status**

- ☐ Full-time
- ☐ Part-time
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Retired

26. How many children live in your household?

- ☐ None
- ☐ One
- ☐ Two
- ☐ Three
- ☐ Four or more

27. What is your highest level of formal education?

- ☐ Less than high school
- ☐ High school graduate/GED
- ☐ Some college, trade or vocational school
- ☐ College degree
- ☐ Post graduate work or degree

28. What is closest to your annual household income?

- ☐ under \$25,000
- ☐ under \$25,000
- ☐ under \$25,000
- ☐ over \$25,000

29. What is your ethnicity?

- ☐ Black
- ☐ White
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Other (please specify)

PRE-SURVEY-THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**38. I usually attend:**

- ☐ Sunday School Only
- ☐ Worship Services Only
- ☐ Both Sunday School and Worship Service

POST-SURVEY-THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

1. Survey Pre-Questions: June-July 2012 Attendance

1. How often did you attend the following services at First Baptist Church during June and July 2012?

	Adult Sunday School Class	Sunday Worship
June 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
June 10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
June 17	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
June 24	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
July 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
July 8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. SCENARIO ONE - LIMITED ENGLISH SKILLS

State-funded programs cannot meet the demand for English tutoring among the growing number of immigrants in our communities. Prince William County (which includes Manassas and Manassas Park) experienced a large percentage increase in the number of adults and children with limited English proficiency. Due to limited funds, only a small portion of these adults were able to enroll in state-funded English for Speakers of Other Language classes. A non-profit organization that offers such classes is in need of space to host English for Speakers of Other Language classes. They are reaching out to schools, churches, and businesses for space.

What do you believe should be the proper response of the church in this scenario?

For each statement below, please mark what best describes your belief.

2. The church should only help as a last resort.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

3. The church has a responsibility to help.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

POST-SURVEY-THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

4. The church is not the State, we must stick to our biblical mandate to save souls and praise God.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

5. The church shouldn't take on many social issues.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

6. Social justice demands we offer space and love.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

1. SCENARIO TWO – HIGH COST OF MEDICATIONS

The high cost of prescription drugs is one of the biggest issues facing individuals and families who stop into the offices of the Manassas or Prince William County free clinics. Those with diabetes and mental health problems are especially vulnerable, because without their medications their conditions can spiral downward fast, potentially resulting in job losses or prison and more expensive care later. Children with attention deficit disorder (ADD or ADHD) often are not permitted in school without their medications and parents must seek alternative childcare, which is expensive. Prince William County (which includes Manassas and Manassas Park) experienced an increase in the number of adults and children needing assistance with the high costs of medications, however the government is reluctant to offer up significant dollars to assist. The costs would be high. It wants to keep the citizens' taxes low and not put an undue burden on its businesses and homeowners. Although the members of the governing body are sympathetic to the circumstances of these persons, they do not feel the need to allocate significant dollars to the cause. Some non-profits are stepping up to the plate, but they can only do so much. A community organizing effort is underway to address the County Board of Supervisors and demand more monies for the clinics. First Baptist Church has been asked to participate and help plan and lead the action.

What do you believe should be the proper response of the church in this scenario?

POST-SURVEY-THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

For each statement below, please mark what BEST describes your belief.

7. The church should help a little but not lead.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Disagree

8. The church should leave it up to individuals.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Disagree

9. The church is not the State; that is not our responsibility.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Disagree

10. The church should stay out of politics. The Bible doesn't address this matter for the church.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Disagree

POST-SURVEY-THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

11. Social justice demands we participate and lead.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

4. SCENARIO THREE – AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND FORECLOSURE CRISIS

The wait for affordable housing through the Catholic Charities Housing Office (CCHO) has grown from less than 30 days in 2005 to at least 6-12 months in 2012. In the first quarter of 2007, CCHO received 175 applications for permanent housing in the City of Manassas, but only had nine openings. Recently, research has revealed that a significant number of the mortgage loans that banks offered customers between 2003 and 2009 were fraudulent or unethical. People of color were targeted and offered subprime loans at outrageous interest rates even when some qualified for prime loan rates. Many were offered loans they did not qualify to obtain based on annual incomes. Some received modifications on their loans, but the banks foreclosed anyway. Others received modifications that increased their monthly mortgage payments. Nearly 50% of homeowners in Prince William County are "underwater" meaning they owe more on the home than its current value. The banks and politicians are reporting that the worst is over and things are getting back to normal. However, many of our neighbors are still struggling and facing foreclosures.

What do you believe should be the proper response of the church in this scenario?

For each statement below, please mark what BEST describes your belief.

12. The church should only preach and teach stewardship (fiscal responsibility).

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

13. Individuals are accountable for taking on too much debt and now must face their bad decisions.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

POST-SURVEY-THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

14. The church is not a bank, but should help its own members who may need a little/limited help.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

15. The banks will handle it fairly; scripture tells us to only preach and teach the Gospel.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

16. Social justice demands the church advocate for just policies by the banks and politicians.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Somewhat Disagree
☐ Disagree

5. YOUR CHURCH PARTICIPATION

Please select one answer only.

POST-SURVEY-THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

17. How long have you attended this church?

- ☐ One year or less
- ☐ 1-2 years
- ☐ 3-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-20 years
- ☐ More than 20 years

18. Has your involvement in the congregation increased, decreased, or remained about the same in the last two (2) years?

- ☐ Increased
- ☐ Decreased
- ☐ Remained the Same

19. On average, about how many times a month do you attend Christian Education classes (Sunday School and/or Bible Study)?

- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Twice a week
- ☐ Twice a month
- ☐ Once a month

Other (please specify):

20. How many church ministries are you involved in this church (including singing in the choir as one ministry)?

- ☐ None
- ☐ One
- ☐ Two
- ☐ Three
- ☐ Four or more

POST-SURVEY-THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

21. How many persons or families have you invited as guests or to join First Baptist Church in the past 12 months?

- ☐ None
- ☐ One
- ☐ Two
- ☐ Three
- ☐ Four or more

22. From the choices listed below, check the SINGLE, MOST IMPORTANT reason you have remained involved in your church (only one):

- ☐ Spiritual growth at this church
- ☐ Church social ministry/community outreach
- ☐ Church reaches non-Christians with the gospel
- ☐ Church is committed to promoting social justice
- ☐ Church is evangelistic and/or missions program
- ☐ Church denominational affiliation
- ☐ Presence of the Holy Spirit in this church
- ☐ Church is under the leadership of Jesus
- ☐ Opportunities to do ministry
- ☐ Church's theology or religious orientation

6. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please select only one response.

23. Which age bracket are you in?

- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 26-35
- ☐ 36-45
- ☐ 46-55
- ☐ 56-64
- ☐ 65 or above

POST-SURVEY-THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**24. Are you:**

- ☐ Female
☐ Male

25. Are you:

- ☐ Unmarried (divorced, separated)
☐ Single (never married)
☐ Married
☐ Widowed

26. Employment Status

- ☐ Full-time
☐ Part-time
☐ Unemployed
☐ Student
☐ Retired

27. How many children live in your household?

- ☐ None
☐ One
☐ Two
☐ Three
☐ Four or more

28. What is your highest level of formal education?

- ☐ Less than high school
☐ High school graduate/GED
☐ Some college, trade or vocational school
☐ College degree
☐ Post graduate work or degree

POST-SURVEY-THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**29. What is closest to your annual household income?**

- ☐ under \$25,000
- ☐ under \$75,000
- ☐ under \$100,000
- ☐ over \$100,000

30. What is your ethnicity?

- ☐ Black
- ☐ White
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

31. I usually attend:

- ☐ Sunday School Only
- ☐ Worship Services Only
- ☐ Both Sunday School and Worship Service

APPENDIX D

PRE AND POST QUESTIONNAIRES

PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

1. SECTION I

Listed below are a number of task statements that your local church could perform. Please mark each statement by indicating whether you generally agree with the statement (that is, Generally Satisfied), whether you feel your congregation needs to Give More Emphasis (that is, it needs to do more of it or do it better), whether you feel it receives Too Much Emphasis in your congregation (that is, it needs to do less of it), or, you feel the church should Stay Out of it (that is, it is not something the church should be doing). Please mark only one answer for each statement.

1. Provide worship that deepens members' experience with God and the Christian tradition.

- ☐ Give More Emphasis
- ☐ Generally Satisfied
- ☐ Too Much Emphasis
- ☐ Stay Out of It

2. Share the good news of the Gospel with the unchurched and unsaved.

- ☐ Give More Emphasis
- ☐ Generally Satisfied
- ☐ Too Much Emphasis
- ☐ Stay Out of It

3. Engage in acts of charity and service for persons in need in the community and worldwide.

- ☐ Give More Emphasis
- ☐ Generally Satisfied
- ☐ Too Much Emphasis
- ☐ Stay Out of It

4. Sermons and teachings with biblical support for Christians involvement in matters of social justice.

- ☐ Give More Emphasis
- ☐ Generally Satisfied
- ☐ Too Much Emphasis
- ☐ Stay Out of It

PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

5. The church taking a more activist role on the political, social, and economic issues of the day.

- ☐ Give More Emphasis
- ☐ Generally Satisfied
- ☐ Too Much Emphasis
- ☐ Stay Out of It

2. SECTION II

Below are statements regarding your personal involvement and/or opinion. Please mark only one answer for each statement.

6. I last participated in a community outreach ministry program

- ☐ within the last few months
- ☐ more than a year ago
- ☐ never

7. I last participated in a social justice program or action

- ☐ within the last few months
- ☐ more than a year ago
- ☐ never

8. I last participated in a fellowship action

- ☐ within the last few months
- ☐ more than a year ago
- ☐ never

9. I last participated in a missions event

- ☐ within the last few months
- ☐ more than a year ago
- ☐ never

3. SECTION III

PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

10. For each of the following statements concerning a church's involvement in outreach and social justice, please answer whether you believe the statement is important, somewhat important, or not important at all.

	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important at all
It shows compassion for persons in need.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It helps to make society more just.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is the prophetic work of the church.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is a part of Black Church history & tradition.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is preached and taught in my church.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is being true to the Christian faith.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. SECTION IV

11. From the choices listed below, check the **SINGLE, MOST IMPORTANT** reason you have **NOT** spent time involved in your church's outreach and/or social justice opportunities (only one).

- ☐ I'm too busy with work, family, and activities outside of church.
- ☐ These are not the priorities of the church.
- ☐ I was involved in the past and have burned out.
- ☐ They are too political and controversial.
- ☐ I live too far away.
- ☐ These ministries don't seem important.
- ☐ The ministry and opportunities are not well explained.
- ☐ No one has asked me to get involved.
- ☐ I don't see how it is connected to my faith.
- ☐ None of the above, I am actively involved.

PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

12. Below is a list of words or phrases that might be used to describe your church. For each word or phrase, please indicate the degree to which the word or phrase describes your church.

	Describes our church	Somewhat describes our church	Doesn't describe us
Traditional	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contemporary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Agent for Social Change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Evangelical	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Race/ethnicity blind	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Compassionate/Caring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Please identify the priority you believe your congregation places on each of the following.

	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Outreach to people not members of the church	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Justice in the local community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spreading the Gospel in word and deed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Welcoming age, ethnic, & income diversity in the membership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Giving emergency assistance to persons in crisis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Networking with nonprofits, civic groups, and other churches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. For each statement below, please mark what best describes your belief concerning the statement.

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Undecided	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
A role of the church is to help save souls	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The church has a responsibility to the needy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Christian faith must focus only on faith	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Christian faith must promote God's justice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social justice is important to church teachings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. SECTION V: YOUR CHURCH PARTICIPATION

Figure 4

PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

Please select one answer only.

15. How long have you attended this church?

- ☐ Less than one year
- ☐ 1-2 years
- ☐ 3-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-20 years
- ☐ 21 or more years

16. Has your involvement in the congregation increased, decreased, or remained about the same in the last two (2) years?

- ☐ Increased
- ☐ Decreased
- ☐ Remained the Same

17. On average, how many times a month do you attend Christian Education classes (Sunday School and/or Bible Study)?

- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Twice a week
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Twice a month
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

18. How many church ministries are you involved in this church (including singing in the choir as one ministry)?

- ☐ None
- ☐ One
- ☐ Two
- ☐ Three
- ☐ Four or more

PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

19. How many persons or families have you invited as guests or to join First Baptist Church in the past 12 months?

- ☐ None
- ☐ One
- ☐ Two
- ☐ Three
- ☐ Four or more

20. From the choices listed below, check the SINGLE, MOST IMPORTANT reason you have remained involved in your church (only one).

- ☐ Spiritual growth at this church
- ☐ Church social ministry/community outreach
- ☐ Church reaches non-Christians with the gospel
- ☐ Church is committed to promoting social justice
- ☐ Church's evangelistic and/or missions program
- ☐ Church's denominational affiliation
- ☐ Presence of the Holy Spirit in this church
- ☐ Church is under the leadership of Jesus
- ☐ Cooperation to do ministry
- ☐ Church's theological or religious orientation

6. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please select only one response.

21. Which age bracket are you in?

- ☐ 18-29
- ☐ 30-39
- ☐ 40-49
- ☐ 50-59
- ☐ 60-64
- ☐ 65 or above

PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY**22. Are you:**

- ☐ Female
☐ Male

23. Are you:

- ☐ Unmarried (or never married)
☐ Single (never married)
☐ Married
☐ Widowed

24. Employment Status

- ☐ Full-time
☐ Part-time
☐ Unemployed
☐ Student
☐ Retired

25. How many children live in your household?

- ☐ None
☐ One
☐ Two
☐ Three
☐ Four or more

26. What is your highest level of formal education?

- ☐ Less than high school
☐ High school graduate/GED
☐ Some college, trade, or vocational school
☐ College degree
☐ Post graduate work or degree

PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY**27. What is closest to your annual household income?**

- ☐ under \$20,000
- ☐ under \$25,000
- ☐ under \$300,000
- ☐ over \$200,000

28. What is your ethnicity?

- ☐ Black
- ☐ White
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ Asian*
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

29. I usually attend:

- ☐ Sunday School Only
- ☐ Worship Services Only
- ☐ Both Sunday School and Worship Service

POST-QUESTIONNAIRE: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

1. June and July 2012 Attendance

This section asks about attendance at various events at First Baptist Church during June and a portion of July 2012. Continue to the next section upon completion. Thank you for your participation.

1. How often did you attend the following services at First Baptist Church during June and July 2012?

	Adult Sunday School Class	Sunday Worship
June 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
June 10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
June 17	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
June 24	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
July 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
July 8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. SECTION I

Listed below are a number of task statements that your local church could perform. Please mark each statement by indicating whether you generally agree with the statement (that is, Generally Satisfied); whether you feel your congregation needs to Give More Emphasis (that is, it needs to do more of it or do it better); whether you feel it receives Too Much Emphasis in your congregation (that is, it needs to do less of it); or, you feel the church should Stay Out of it (that is, it is not something the church should be doing). Please mark only one answer for each statement.

2. Provide worship that deepens members' experience with God and the Christian tradition.

- ☐ Give More Emphasis
☐ Generally Satisfied
☐ Too Much Emphasis
☐ Stay Out of It

3. Share the good news of the Gospel with the unchurched and unsaved.

- ☐ Give More Emphasis
☐ Generally Satisfied
☐ Too Much Emphasis
☐ Stay Out of It

POST-QUESTIONNAIRE: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

4. Engage in acts of charity and service for persons in need in the community and worldwide.

- ☐ Give More Emphasis
☐ Generally Satisfied
☐ Too Much Emphasis
☐ Stay Out of It

5. Sermons and teachings with biblical support for Christians involvement in matters of social justice.

- ☐ Give More Emphasis
☐ Generally Satisfied
☐ Too Much Emphasis
☐ Stay Out of It

6. The church taking a more activist role on the political, social, and economic issues of the day.

- ☐ Give More Emphasis
☐ Generally Satisfied
☐ Too Much Emphasis
☐ Stay Out of It

3. SECTION II

Below are statements regarding your personal involvement and/or opinion. Please mark only one answer for each statement.

7. I last participated in a community outreach ministry program

- ☐ within the last few months
☐ more than a year ago
☐ never

8. I last participated in a social justice program or action

- ☐ within the last few months
☐ more than a year ago
☐ never

POST-QUESTIONNAIRE: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

9. I last participated in a fellowship action

- ☐ within the last few months
☐ more than a year ago
☐ never

10. I last participated in a missions event

- ☐ within the last few months
☐ more than a year ago
☐ never

4. SECTION III

11. For each of the following statements concerning a church's involvement in outreach and social justice, please answer whether you believe the statement is important, somewhat important, or not important at all.

	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important at all
It shows our passion for particular needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It helps to make society more just	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is the prophetic work of the church	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is a part of Black Church history & tradition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is preached and taught in my church	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is being true to the Christian faith	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. SECTION IV

POST-QUESTIONNAIRE: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

12. From the choices listed below, check the **SINGLE, MOST IMPORTANT** reason you have **NOT** spent time involved in your church's outreach and/or social justice opportunities (only one).

- ☐ I'm too busy with work, family, and activities outside of church.
☐ These aren't the priorities of the church.
☐ I was involved in the past and have burned out.
☐ They are too political and controversial.
☐ I've been lonely.
☐ These initiatives don't seem important.
☐ The ministry and opportunities are not well organized.
☐ No one has asked me to get involved.
☐ I don't see how it is connected to my faith walk.
☐ None of the above, I am actively involved.

13. Below is a list of words or phrases that might be used to describe your church. For each word or phrase, please indicate the degree to which the word or phrase describes your church.

	Describes our church	Somewhat describes our church	Doesn't describe us
Traditional	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contemporary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Agent for Social Change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Evangelical	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worship Focused	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Compassionate/Caring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

POST-QUESTIONNAIRE: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

14. Please identify the priority you believe your congregation places on each of the following.

	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Outreach to potential members of the church	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Justice in the local community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spreading the Gospel in words and deed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Welcoming age, ethnic, & income diversity in the membership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Giving emergency assistance to persons in crisis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Networking with nonprofits, civic groups, and other churches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. For each statement below, please mark what best describes your belief concerning the statement.

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Undecided	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
A role of the church is to help its members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The church has a responsibility to the needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Christian faith must focus only on faith	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Christian faith must promote God's justice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Justice is important to church teachings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. SECTION V: YOUR CHURCH PARTICIPATION

Please select one answer only.

POST-QUESTIONNAIRE: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

16. How long have you attended this church?

- ☐ Less than one year
- ☐ 1-2 years
- ☐ 3-4 years
- ☐ 5-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-20 years
- ☐ 20 or more years

17. Has your involvement in the congregation increased, decreased, or remained about the same in the last two (2) years?

- ☐ Increased
- ☐ Decreased
- ☐ Remained the Same

18. On average, how many times a month do you attend Christian Education classes (Sunday School and/or Bible Study)?

- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Twice a week
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Twice a month
- ☐ Other (please specify):

19. How many church ministries are you involved in this church (including singing in the choir as one ministry)?

- ☐ None
- ☐ One
- ☐ Two
- ☐ Three
- ☐ Four or more

POST-QUESTIONNAIRE: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

20. How many persons or families have you invited as guests or to join First Baptist Church in the past 12 months?

- ☐ None
- ☐ One
- ☐ Two
- ☐ Three
- ☐ Four or more

21. From the choices listed below, check the SINGLE, MOST IMPORTANT reason you have remained involved in your church (only one).

- ☐ Spiritual growth at this church
- ☐ Church social ministry/community outreach
- ☐ Church membership-Christians with the Gospel
- ☐ Church is committed to promoting social justice
- ☐ Church's evangelistic and/or outreach program
- ☐ Church denominational affiliation
- ☐ Presence of the Holy Spirit in this church
- ☐ Church is under the leadership of Jesus
- ☐ Opportunities to do ministry
- ☐ Church's theological or religious orientation

7. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please select only one response.

22. Which age bracket are you in?

- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65 or above

POST-QUESTIONNAIRE: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY**23. Are you:**

- ☐ Female
☐ Male

24. Are you:

- ☐ Unmarried (divorced/separated)
☐ Single (never married)
☐ Married
☐ Widowed

25. Employment Status

- ☐ Full-time
☐ Part-time
☐ Unemployed
☐ Student
☐ Retired

26. How many children live in your household?

- ☐ None
☐ One
☐ Two
☐ Three
☐ Four or more

27. What is your highest level of formal education?

- ☐ Less than high school
☐ High school graduate/GED
☐ Some college, trade or vocational school
☐ College degree
☐ Post graduate work or degree

POST-QUESTIONNAIRE: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY**28. What is closest to your annual household income?**

- ☐ under \$25,000
- ☐ under \$35,000
- ☐ under \$50,000
- ☐ over \$50,000

29. What is your ethnicity?

- ☐ Black
- ☐ White
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

30. I usually attend:

- ☐ Sunday School Only
- ☐ Worship Services Only
- ☐ Both Sunday School and Worship Service

APPENDIX E

SERMONS

JUNE 3, 2012 SERMON ONE

WHAT IS THE PROPER RESPONSE?

Psalm 145:17-146 Luke 4:14-21

I want to tell you the story of a millionaire in his palace that spent his days counting his gold. Beside the palace was a poor cobbler who spent his days singing as he repaired shoes. The joyful singing irritated the rich man. One day he decided to give some gold coins to the cobbler. At first, the cobbler was overjoyed, and he took the coins & hid them. Later, he would be worried & go back to check if the coins were still there. Then he would be worried in case someone had seen him, & he would move the coins & hide them in another place. During all this, he ceased to sing. Then one day he realized that he had ceased to sing because of the gold coins. The cobbler took them back to the rich man & said, "Take back your coins and give me back my songs."

Who has taken your song? Better yet, to whom or what have you exchanged for your praise. Gospel Artist Kirk Franklin has a song that tells us "the reason why we sing" Dionne Warwick has an album out called "Why We sing." There are many songs over the decades that give us reasons to sing, but they are not trailblazers to the cause.

It started thousands of years ago. Psalm 146 is the first in a series of hymns or songs of why we sing. Psalms 146-150, all open & close with "Praise the Lord!" (Hallelujah). It brings the Psalms to a close w/a Crescendo of Praise. Psalm 145:21 paves the way by reminding us - it is with our deeds & mouths that we must praise. "My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord. Let every creature praise his holy name forever and ever."

Psalm 146 is instructional for us. The instruction is simply this: Trust God! It is a commanding invitation: "Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, my soul." What is Praise? Psalm 146 gives us three concepts.

PRAISE IS A WORSHIP CONCEPT

Praise is the offering of the whole self to God in worship and work. Praise is not simply a song or testimony, but it is an 'all in' deal. Fifty percent will not do. Eighty percent will not do. Ninety-Nine and a half percent will not do! The offering of your praise is the lifelong calling of all in response to God's claim on humanity. It is not dependent nor allows excuses due to age.

Look at verse 2. "I will praise the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live." The opposite of praising God is trusting in you. Some do not sing, not because they lack a voice, but like the cobbler, some have sold their voice for a few gold coins of

comfort, class, position, or tradition. Yet, the psalmist warns against it in verse 3. Trust God, not human rulers. Why is this true? It is true because human rulers and their plans perish. Look at verse 4. “When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing.”

In the Psalms and throughout the Bible as a whole, wickedness is essentially a matter of trust. It is the decision to trust someone or something other than God. Joy and blessing are a matter of whom you trust. It is confidence in God’s help and hope. The better trust is in God. Look at verse 5. “Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God.”

Remember: happiness is not the absence of pain and trouble, but the presence of a God who cares about our human hurt & who acts on behalf of the afflicted and oppressed. Verses 6-9 make it plain. Verse 6 cites Israel’s two basic traditions: God is creator and God is deliverer. “He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—he remains faithful forever.” Theologian Walter Bruggemann calls it “the main claim for God.”

Praise is a WORSHIP concept and Second ...

PRAISE IS A JUSTICE CONCEPT

Verse 7 features the concept of “justice.” Justice idealizes the royal policy or will of God. Verses 7-9 tell us how God exercises sovereignty—by loving service on behalf of persons in need. Verses 7-9: Whom does God help? The hungry, prisoners, the blind, the bowed down, the righteous who are constantly beat down, assaulted and oppressed, the foreigner, the fatherless & the widow.

“He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow....”

God helps the needy and oppressed. If you will—it is the policy statement for the kingdom of God. The Lord stands for and works for justice, not as an abstract concept for the people of God but as an embodied reality that shows up & shows out in the actions of God’s people—the church—in you! It is provision for basic human needs, it is standing for liberation from oppression—it is empowerment for the disenfranchised & dispossessed.

Therefore, what is the proper response to God’s call and claim? Look at the beginning and end of Psalm 146: “Praise the Lord!” Praise is a Worship concept, it is a Justice concept, and lastly ...

PRAISE IS A DECISION CONCEPT

The proclamation of God's reign calls for a decision. The issue is this: Whom shall we trust? The question is as timely & crucial now as it ever has been. To trust in rulers & humans to do the right thing is a temptation. Human help seems to hold all the answers. Self-Help is all around us. We like to say, "God helps those who help themselves" all the time. Yet it results, not in praise of God, but in fake self-congratulation.

Psalms 146 is therefore an urgent call to praise. You see, in biblical terms, to praise God is to live, and to live is to praise God. Praise is liturgy and lifestyle.

This is Jesus' preaching of the reign of God and his teaching of God's will in a ministry of justice, feeding, liberation, healing, and compassion: "He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

The cobbler in our story thought the gold coins would make his life better, but in it, he lost his voice, song, and praise! He lost his proper response. "During all this, he ceased to sing. Then one day he realized that he had ceased to sing because of the gold coins. The cobbler took them back to the rich man & said, take back your coins and give me back my songs."

The late Walter Hawkins wrote and sang a gospel classic gospel years ago.
 VERSE 1: I will sing Your praise, for You've done such a marvelous thing
 for someone so wretched, yet my soul You have redeemed.
 No one else could do it, no one could care half as much;
 yet You thought my soul was worth it, so You gave Your only Son.

CHORUS: You gave that I might live. You gave that I might be set free.
 Exchanged Your life for mine, what a marvelous thing You've done.

VERSE 2: Some folks see my faults, Lord, You see my accomplishments;
 even the good works You have begun in me. You also see my finish,
 no, not half done, every battle already won.
 I can't help but praise You, Lord for the marvelous things You've done.
 Ask your neighbor, "What is the Proper Response?" The answer is PRAISE!

JUNE 24, 2012 SERMON TWO

FROM CROWD TO COMMUNITY

Micah 6:1-8 Mark 6:30-44

Back in 1967 (45 years ago), the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote, “In assessing the results of the Negro revolution so far, it can be concluded that Negroes have established a foothold, no more. We have written a Declaration of Independence, itself an accomplishment, but the efforts to transform the words into a life experience still lies ahead. The hard truth is that neither Negro nor white has yet done enough to expect the dawn of a new day. While much has been done, it has been accomplished by too few and on a scale too limited for the breadth of the goal. Freedom is not won by a passive acceptance of suffering. Freedom is won by a struggle against suffering. By this measure, Negroes have not yet paid the full price for freedom. And whites have not yet faced the full cost of justice. The brunt of the Negro’s past battles was borne by a very small striking force. Though millions were ardent and passionate supporters, only a modest number were actively engaged, and these were relatively too few for a broad war against racism, poverty and discrimination.” This excerpt comes from the book: “Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?”

The disciples are just returning from their first missionary journey. They are tired, but they still “gathered around Jesus and reported all they had done and taught.”

The excited crowd presses in, making it impossible for Jesus & his twelve disciples even to take time to eat. Jesus invites his disciples to a retreat in verse 31, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” However, they are interrupted because of the success of their own outreach. The crowd sees them leaving in a boat, recognizes them, and follows. They want to be near Jesus.

Some raced around the lake, beating the boat to its destination. Jesus does not show any irritation. Jesus shows compassion and he postpones the retreat.

Verse 34 says Jesus saw the crowd as “sheep without a shepherd. Therefore, he began teaching them many things.” They were, in a sense, questions with no answers, distress with no relief, anguish with no deliverance, tears with no consolation, or sin with any forgiveness. Jesus’ response is not irritation, but a need to teach. For Jesus, it is time to get to work.

The problem is the disciples are not doing what they are empowered to do. Jesus did not care how big their reputation or budget grew; all he cared about were the results of their faith. What Jesus saw was physically & spiritually hungry people wrapped up in religious red tape & excuses for remaining in the crowd. They were spiritually starved, as well as physically hungry.

Jesus taught all day. By the evening, the twelve disciples are frustrated and tired from working a double shift. They tell Jesus that it is late, they are stuck in a remote place and there is no food. The Message Bible translation says “When the disciples thought this had gone on long enough—it was now quite late in the day—they interrupted: “We are a long way out in the country, and it’s very late. Pronounce a benediction and send these folks off so they can get some supper.”

Look at Jesus’ response in verse 37: “You give them something to eat.” The crowd took our retreat & now we have to feed them (double meaning here)! The crowd has become a burden—their burden!

However, that is not what Jesus has in mind. The disciples assume the resources and work for this repast has to come only from them. However, Jesus has another plan; He sends the twelve into the crowd to consider what resources might be available from them. In verse 38, the Master asks his disciples “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.” Jesus will help them to realize—what they and the crowd has will be enough.

In addition, in doing this, Jesus turns the crowd into community. Jesus does something strange—he tells the disciples to have the crowd sit down in groups on the green grass. Not just any size but Jesus tells them to sit in groups of fifty and one hundred. We miss it, but in that moment, the crowd becomes a community.

The twelve need to do more than complain about the crowd’s hunger and the lack of food while sending people away empty. You have not done your Christian ministry if all we have done is point out the problems in our society and talk about them at the water cooler. You have not done your Christian duty if you are an ardent and passionate supporter, while letting a modest number be actively engaged (and these are relatively too few) for a broad war against racism, poverty, and injustice.

Social Justice requires you to transform the crowd into a community. You are obligated to do something about these problems. The priestly ministry of every Christian and church is to minister to the spiritual needs of others. However, it is so much more. The prophetic ministry of every Christian and church is also to defeat and deal with the root of our social, political, and social injustice problems.

After blessing and breaking the five loaves and two fish, Jesus directs these twelve disciples to distribute the food to the people. In a competition, you take more than your share, denying others. However, in community, the dynamics change.

The miracle that happens recalls God’s answer to Moses in Numbers 11, “Is the Lord’s arm to short? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you.” In addition, at the end of the day, everyone learns something.

The disciples assume the hungry crowd is helpless. They assume the crowds are to be dismissed with their needs ignored or become dependent on the disciples. Instead, Jesus teaches how to organize the crowd into a community. Jesus teaches the church how to look deeply to discover the resources already present. The community around us has needs and we must help organize them to realize they do not have to stay helpless & hopeless.

It is time to look inside yourself and “Go and see.” The promise of community is that we will discover resources to act justly, and offer love, mercy, and humility in such abundance that not only will the community discover its capacity to be the difference, but also our own spirits will be fed in the process.

Notice something special and an extra blessing! At the end of the day, there is a basket for each of the twelve disciples. They were baskets that started empty, but ended in their hands full of fish and bread for each of them. The same happens for each one of us when we become community with those who need us. You have misunderstandings about what God wants from us. We are challenged to tackle the impossible problems with limited resources and to discover the possibilities of God. It is the call of the prophet Micah.

Too often we think we have done what God expects if we have been baptized or joined the church, just as Micah’s audience thought they had done everything God wanted when they sacrificed animals. Some think they have pleased the Lord because we celebrate Communion. We do not please God by singing out of a certain hymnbook or translation of the Word of God.

What does God require? Read Micah 6:8 with me. “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

What are the dreams for the communities around us? What will you do to make things better? Are you willing to join others so we might work to change the way things are for the glory of God? To walk humbly with God requires you to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. It requires a new life in Christ. A new commitment to Christ. It requires you leave the crowd and become part of the community of God in Christ. It requires you surrender your life and will to the Lord who will give you eternal life, joy, peace, and a plan to bless and be a blessing.

Why is this true? Christ did it for you on Calvary and proved it with an empty tomb. Tell your neighbor—it is time to move from the crowd to community!

JULY 01, 2012 SERMON THREE

FROM PRIDE TO PERSEVERANCE

Isaiah 58:6-7 Luke 18:1-8

Pastor and Professor Marvin McMickle wrote in his book “Where Have All The Prophets Gone?” that “There is no better example of the balance between prophetic preaching and praise & worship than what was widely experienced during the civil rights movement. When a passionate time of praise & worship is disconnected from a disciplined & determined time of service in the name of God, the worship itself becomes invalid & inauthentic.”

At what point must we speak to the injustices, bias, abuses & poverty around us and even toward us? How do you, as part of the believing community, maintain a personal responsibility for works of justice & righteousness?

Last week we heard the prophet Micah reveal God’s requirement of what is classified as good: to do justice, to love mercy & to walk humbly with our God. Today the prophet Isaiah speaks to us in Isaiah 58:6-7. God wants to bless, but the blessing is given to those in unbroken covenant with God. What evidence can the Israelites (and you) give that they are in such a relationship? Ethical Behavior.

God only commands people to fast a couple of times in the Old Testament. Yet, in hundreds of places, God commands the people to treat others, especially those weaker & vulnerable with justice. God tells the people that if they want to stop doing something, stop oppressing the poor or silently watching it happen.

God calls for behavior that is self-forgetful & outward-looking; that is - work to set the oppressed free. It calls for Perseverance! Luke records a great example for us in Luke 18. Read Luke 18:1-8. Neither the judge nor the widow conforms to accepted stereotypes. The judge is afraid the widow will give him a black eye, while the widow acts in an unexpected way.

Jesus praises strong, outrageous action: blind Bartimaeus who calls out to Jesus from the side of the road, much to the dismay of Jesus’ disciples. He praises the woman with the flow of blood who breaks taboo to touch Jesus in the crowd. Jesus commends the Canaanite woman who argues with Jesus about the welfare of her daughter until he relents and sends her on her way and the four friends who literally tear the roof off the house to present their friend to Jesus. In each case, Jesus declares, Your faith has made you well.

Jesus did say you must take up your cross and follow me, but not once did Jesus say to anyone who came to him for healing - your injustice is just a cross you are going to have to bear. Not once did Jesus imply that disability was simply our lot in life or a punishment. Nowhere does Jesus suggest to those who are poor by neglect or hurting by cruelty or oppressed by abuse of power that they accept their condition or accommodate themselves to the injustices of Wall Street, Main Street, or Backstreet.

It is a parable about a widow who pesters an unjust judge until he gives her what she wants. The punch line is when the Son of Man returns, will he find faith on the earth? What kind of faith is Jesus talking to us about? Is it a faith like the widow who keeps on battering the judge until she gets what she wants. It is a faith like the Canaanite woman, who would not take no for an answer. Maybe it is a faith like blind Bartimaeus who would not be silenced by irritated disciples. Possibly it is a faith like the friends of the paralytic who tore the roof off just to get to Jesus.

Frederick Douglass is credited with remarking, "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom & yet depreciate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning."

The widow is without power in a society where the community of faith singles out widows, orphans, and aliens for special care. Why is this fact the case? It is the case because the system is stacked against them. It is a case of life and destitution.

For the judge in this text, it was just another case. Dismiss the woman's complaint and make a backroom deal with her adversary. She might make a bit of a fuss, but that is how things are done.

Yet the widow refuses to play the game. She cannot compete in the backroom deals, so she takes her case public. Culture says her vote and voice do not count, but she refuses to keep silent. She presses the judge—gives him a black eye. The widow does not attack the judge's motives or credibility. She simply insists that he do what is right and give her justice.

And the judge finally does. The judge addresses the woman's request, not because she was right, not because it is the 'just' thing to do, not because he is worried about what God might think of him, not because he suddenly accepted this woman's argument. The judge relents because he is simply tired of this widow's persistent, pressing and protesting actions.

Having a good idea or being on the side of right is not enough—if you are not willing to persistently protest for justice, you will find that Frederick Douglass is right: "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

Here is my point—follow me carefully! Most commentaries turn to the judge as the one who reveals something about God. However, the judge does not reflect God. The judge does not reflect what we believe about God. The judge does not reflect the God who hears and responds to the cries of the poor, widow, orphan or alien.

The text tells us this judge neither fears God nor respects his fellow citizens. I propose it is the widow who is in the image of God and who is presented to disciples as a figure to imitate.

Here is why I conclude this: When the judge is pictured as God, the text would seem to suggest if you harass God long enough, you will wear God down. I do not see the theology! Luke 11 reminds us that God is ready and willing to give all good gifts to those who ask.

However, when the widow is seen as God, the message of this parable changes for us. The message now says when one perseveres to resist injustice, faces it, names it, and denounces it, until what is ‘right’ is achieved. It is then that you are acting as God does.

The parable reveals power in what looks like weakness. Jesus said to the Apostle Paul His power is made perfect in our weakness. The message is completed in the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. What looked like helplessness and weakness on Calvary’s Cross (to the Pharisees & Roman authorities) actually transformed into the very defeat of the powers of Satan, sin, and death.

The judge never changed—just like Satan, sin, and death will never change. Victory is won by the widow, just like victory is won over sin and death. It is won in the persistent love of Christ.

Tell your neighbor: Let us move from Pride to Perseverance!

*JULY 08, 2012 SERMON FOUR***FROM ANGER TO ACTION**

Amos 5:4-24 Luke 4:1-21

Obery Hendricks, Jr. in his book “The Politics of Jesus” recounts his own journey to recognizing Jesus as a political revolutionary prophetic voice. Professor Hendricks says, “I was raised on the bland Jesus of Sunday school and the gentle retellings of the meek, mild Jesus who told us, in a nice, passive, sentimental way, to love our enemies ... Yet for all my trust and love and fervor, something in the portrayals of Jesus and his message did not seem quite right, something just didn’t make sense. Was this meek, mild Jesus the same Jesus who defiantly called the Pharisees ‘a brood of vipers’ and described them as ‘whitewashed tombs full of every unclean thing?’ Was this the same outraged Jesus who, swinging a fearsome stick, set the Temple money changers to flight? And what did Jesus mean by sayings like ‘I have come not to bring peace, but a sword’?”

Jesus is concerned as much with our soul salvation as with matters of social injustice, racial and gender inequalities, or systematic oppression of the poor. The Gospels show us a Jesus who is as concerned about liberating us from the kingdom of earth as about getting us into the kingdom of heaven. The Romans crucify Jesus for being revelatory and revolutionary. That is ... the Lamb of God—Son of Joseph—Son of Man—Son of God.

Jesus was a political revolutionary. He was not political in the sense that he wanted to start a tea party or be “involved in politics” in the way we think today or wanting to wage war or overthrow the Roman Empire by force. To say Jesus was a political revolutionary is to say the message he proclaimed not only calls for a change in individual hearts, minds and souls, but also change in political, social, and economic powers to benefit instead of abuse; to care instead of could care-less.

Luke 4 portrays Jesus announcing his reason for his anointing—to proclaim spiritual, economic, social, and political change that brings in the kingdom of God: “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me, to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Jesus is a strategic leader. The goal is realizing the kingdom of God. In fact, there are a few strategies that Jesus uses and we, as his disciples, ought to follow.

TREAT THE PEOPLE'S NEEDS AS HOLY

Jesus did not start an institution. Jesus started a movement. He told the disciples to put their love for God into practice by loving their neighbors as themselves. In Jesus, you learn what to stand for and you learn your purpose in God. Look at Luke 11. When the disciples ask Jesus how to pray—it was less how to pray than what to pray.

What should be the focus of the spiritual ministry? What should they ask God to help them accomplish. The core of the prayer is to treat your neighbors and their needs as holy. The prayer was private, but not individual. It is always “our” or “us” or “we.”

GIVE A VOICE TO THE VOICELESS

Read Mark 11. Jesus overturns tables in the Temple. It was not a temper tantrum, this protest action is well planned. Jesus' actions were not purely religious because attacking the money changers and sellers is economic and political. The Temple is the center of Jewish political and economic life.

What was to be a place of justice and concern, did not treat people and their needs as holy. It had become a den of robbers in its oppression of the powerless poor. Jesus condemns the greater love of wealth than of holiness. It is a prophetic announcement to the aristocracy that they must change or be judged. Jesus gave a voice to the voiceless by display of unspoken anger and pain. It is our sacred duty to do so.

SAVE YOUR ANGER FOR THE MISTREATMENT OF OTHERS

In Mark 1:41 when Jesus meets a man with leprosy, who begs on his knees for Jesus to make him clean, Jesus is indignant. A better translation is ‘he was moved with anger.’ So why was Jesus angry?

We know that whatever anger Jesus displays is never because of his own mistreatment, but it is his response to oppression and mistreatment of others. Jesus was not angry with the priests for declaring the man a leper according to Jewish law to protect the community from contagious disease. Jesus' anger was with the people and priests for treating the leper as ‘less-than’ because of a skin ailment. The leper has to cry and beg on his knees to Jesus.

Jesus' response shows us that there are things that we should be angry about. There are things we must say and do as a testimony against every action, system, policy, and institution that excludes any of God's children from the fruits of life God offers—especially community, grace, mercy, love, and family. Our anger, our outrage should show when unjust policies and practices rule the day in our nation, state, county, city, and communities.

Eighth Century prophet Amos reminds us that such strategies (Treat the People's Needs as Holy; Give a Voice to the Voiceless; Save Your Anger for the Mistreatment of Others) cannot trickle down as secondary actions—leftovers—when there is time. Amos' ringing proclamation is found in Amos 5:24: "But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream."

It is a call to practice the politics of Jesus—which is the politics of God the Father. The politics of Jesus are different from the politics of politicians. Partisan politics, such as we see today, are self-serving deals, unethical backroom bonds, seeking only after the good of themselves and those they count as their own, while giving little thought to the well-being of others except as it benefits their personal agendas.

Rather than Love your neighbor as yourself, we practice a 'love yourself and those who are like you.' God's will be done is replaced with our will be done and claiming that our will is God's will. We cannot afford to forget. A slanted view of God that does not recognize God as holy, full of justice, and righteousness is an illusion that will produce a false perception of what God expects of the church today.

What does the Lord expect? It is not ritual worship.

Tell us Amos what God expects ... let righteousness and justice characterize all our activities. Justice should flow like a year-round river, not like a puddle that only has water in it when it rains. "Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!"

God's love always has the final say. Save the world through Christ! Show we love and care through pursuing God's social justice!

Tell your neighbor: It is time to move from anger to action!

APPENDIX F

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Unit 1 • Lesson 1 Justice Derived

June 3, 2012

Rules for Just living: social responsibility

DEVOTIONAL READING

DEUTERONOMY 32:1-7

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday May 28

Deuteronomy 19:15-20
Punishment for False Witness

Tuesday May 29

Psalm 52 God Holds Court

Wednesday May 30

Isaiah 10:1-4
The Day of Punishment

Thursday May 31

Psalm 71:1-9
Rescued from the Wicked
and Upright

Friday June 1

Isaiah 30:18-22
A God of Justice

Saturday June 2

Deuteronomy 31:20-32:7
God's Ways Are Just

Sunday June 3

Exodus 23:1-9
Justice for All© David C. Cook, Publication & Media
Saville Lesson

RULES FOR JUST LIVING

Scripture

Background Scripture: Exodus 22:1–23:9

Scripture Lesson: Exodus 23:1-9

Key Verse: "Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd." Exodus 23:2.

Scripture Lesson for Teens: Exodus 23:1-9

Key Verse for Teens: "Blessed are they who maintain justice, who constantly do what is right." Psalm 106:3.

Lesson Aim

To recognize the importance of cultivating a life of justice, mercy, and integrity.

Lesson Setting

Time: 1:46 B.C.

Place: Mount Sinai

Lesson Outline

Rules for Just Living: Social Responsibility

I. Living in a Virtuous Manner: Exodus 23:1-3

A. Being an Honest Person: vs. 1

B. Being a Person of Integrity: vs. 2-3

II. Living in an Upright Manner: Exodus 23:4-9

A. Being Kind to Others: vs. 4-5

B. Being an Advocate for Justice: vs. 6-7

C. Refusing to Accept a Bribe: vs. 8

D. Refusing to Oppress Others: vs. 9

INTRODUCTIONS

Introduction for Adults

Topic: Justice for All

"Envy is wanting what another person has and feeling badly that I don't have it. Envy is disliking God's goodness to someone else and dismissing God's goodness to me. Envy is desire plus resentment. Envy is anti-community," asserts John Ortberg in *Love Beyond Reason: Moving God's Love from Your Head to Your Heart*.

An envious heart is incapable of showing justice, mercy, and humility. It is too preoccupied. Have you witnessed the results of envy? Envy frequently makes its way into criminal acts. But on a private level, envy is damaging. Its seed of discontentment quickly grows into the weed of resentment. This weed can choke relationships — even among Christians.

So how does a believer eradicate this weed? Extermination begins with developing a right attitude toward God and the blessings God, in God's wisdom, bestows.

Introduction for Teenagers

Topic: Don't Twist Justice

The father regularly taught his son to do what is right. One day, while they worked together with some other men, the language of the other men became exceedingly profane. When the son joined in the talk, his father reminded him that such language was inappropriate.

In the same way, God expected the Israelites to live up to God's high moral standards. This included promoting, not twisting, justice. Instead, once the chosen people were settled in the promised land, they began to wallow in the ways of their corrupt neighbors, allowed immorality and injustice to prevail, and hypocritically worshipping the Lord. In a sense, their lives became profane and inappropriate.

It's perilously easy for us who are Christians to go through the motions of worship, prayer, and other religious activities. We forget that God wants us to grow in our love for God, to mature in our spiritual wisdom and understanding, and to become more like Jesus in our thoughts and actions. Exodus 23:1-9 helps us to see how important it is to cultivate a life of justice, mercy, and integrity.

LESSON COMMENTARY

I. Living In a Virtuous Manner: Exodus 23:1-3**A. Being an Honest Person: vs. 1**

“Do not spread false reports. Do not help a wicked man by being a malicious witness.”

God calls Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt to the promised land. Though Moses was raised his first 40 years of life in Pharaoh’s court, he refuses to ignore the plight of God’s people. Moses kills an Egyptian who is beating a Hebrew slave, then flees into the wilderness of Midian (Exodus 2:11-15; Acts 7:23-29). Another 40 years pass, during which time Moses marries and tends his father-in-law’s sheep (Exod. 2:16-22). Egypt probably became a distant memory for Moses. Yet at the right moment, God shares with now 80-year-old Moses the plan God has in place all along. It is a plan that reveals God’s love and concern for Moses and all of the Israelites. Moses is to be God’s instrument in leading God’s people out of bondage and into a promised land. God has not forgotten the Israelites, nor has God forgotten the promises God made to their ancestors (Exod. 3:7-22; Acts 7:30-34).

The account of the Israelites’ escape from Egyptian oppression is recorded in Exodus 5:1-14:31. In the last plague, which leads to the death of all the firstborn of Egypt, the Israelites’ firstborn are “passed over,” and God institutes the celebration of the Passover (Exod. 12:1-30). Exodus 15:22-19:2 details the Israelites’ journey from the Red Sea crossing to Mount Sinai. Moses climbs Mount Sinai to speak with God (chap. 20). While Moses is still atop Mount Sinai, he receives from God more laws to guide the Israelites’ behavior (21:1). One of the first sets of these laws deals with the Israelites’ relationship with their slaves (vs. 2-11). Slavery is a way of life among the ancient peoples. In fact, slavery is practiced by almost every culture that kept historical records. Among most ancient peoples, slaves are considered strictly as property and are granted no personal rights. This is not the case, however, among the Israelites. Though slaves are considered property, they have certain rights defined under the Mosaic law and oftentimes are treated as a member of the family.

LESSON COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

(continued)

This emphasis on **equity and justice** is found in various laws concerning personal injuries (vss. 12-36) and property (22:1-15). These are followed by many laws centered on the general issue of social responsibility (vss. 16-31). Some of the brief commands in this section reiterate directives God has given earlier, while others are new. Supporting all these commands is God's compassion for the vulnerable. God maintains a special concern for those who are less fortunate than others. In keeping with the Lord's compassion, God commands that the corners of fields are not to be reaped, so that food will be left for the needy (Lev. 19:9-10). God also promises a special blessing to those who reflect God's compassion for the poor (Prov. 19:17), and judgment against those who oppress the poverty-stricken. Additionally, God makes provision for destitute sojourners/foreigners who are not a part of the nation of Israel. For instance, gleanings from the harvest are to be left for them (Deut. 24:19-21).

The Lord wants the people to be holy and devoted to the purposes of God. The Israelites can demonstrate their holiness by living in a virtuous manner. The starting point is their decision to be honest in their dealings with one another. Behind this commitment is the realization that the Lord is a God of justice. Indeed, God's desire for justice among God's people is seen in the laws God prescribes for them. The ordinances recorded in 23:1-9 are intended to demonstrate the spirit in which impartial justice is to be administered by the Israelites.

To help secure justice, God commands that the people not spread baseless reports (vs. 1). This included a refusal to circulate malicious gossip and unfounded rumors (see Exod. 20:16; Lev. 19:16; Deut. 5:20; 19:16-21; Ps. 27:12; Prov. 19:5). No one in the covenant community is to assist a guilty person in a scheme to bring down an innocent party. Since a case can be decided on the testimony of two or three witnesses, it is important to make sure that a false witness not be offered in court, resulting in wrongful punishment (see Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15).

LESSON COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

B. Being a Person of Integrity: vss. 2-3

“Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd, and do not show favoritism to a poor man in his lawsuit.”

Another way the Israelites are instructed to maintain justice is being people of integrity (Exod. 23:2). God calls the people to individual responsibility in doing what is right according to God’s Word, not according to what other people are doing. Being part of a crowd is not an excuse to exempt anyone of guilt. Jesus warns that “wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it” (Matt 7:13).

Exodus 23:2 echoes verse 1 by warning against offering testimony in a lawsuit that agrees with the majority opinion but perverts justice by bringing about a corrupt decision (see Lev. 19:15, 33; Deut. 1:17; 16:19; 24:17; 27:19; 1 Sam. 8:3). Exodus 23:3 adds that giving special treatment to the poor in court just because of their economic situation is just as wrong as condemning the rich simply because of their wealth. In every situation, God wants the Israelites to seek out the truth. The critical issue is whether the accused — either rich or poor — are guilty or innocent.

II. Living In an Upright Manner: Exodus 23:4-9

A. Being Kind to Others: vss. 4-5

“If you come across your enemy’s ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to take it back to him. If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help him with it.”

Living in an upright manner complements living in a virtuous manner. A starting point in this regard is making the effort to be kind to others. For instance, in order for the Israelites to be God’s representatives to the rest of the world, it was important that they exhibit justice and compassion — even to their enemies and to those who hate them. God commands that God’s people help those in need, and God gives them two examples. In the first example, an Israelite encounters the “ox or donkey” (Exod. 9:3, 20) of their foe wandering away.

LESSON COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

In an agriculturally based society, it is common for someone to happen upon a stray animal (see 1 Sam. 9:3, 20). The kind gesture is to return the animal to its owner. In another example, an Israelite came upon a donkey (Exod 23:5) belonging to a foe. The pack animal had either stumbled or collapsed under the heavy load that it was carrying, and now it lay helpless. The quickest way to correct the problem is for two people to stand on each side of the animal and simultaneously lift its load. The compassionate response will not be to ignore the animal, but to stop and offer help (see Deut. 22:1-4; Prov. 25:21).

God knows that acts of compassion can help transform enemies into friends. These commands show that **God has always wanted God's people to be considerate and helpful toward those oppressed, crushed, and in need.** Jesus later instructs His followers to, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:44). This instruction is not easily followed by any of us, but it is the high calling of those who are disciples of Christ. Jesus gives us an example of caring when He prays for those who nailed Him to the cross (Luke 23:34).

Contemporary Example: What do we do to help those under the crushing burden (debt) of immoral mortgages by banks that reaped huge profits, yet desire to hold no responsibility for the mortgage crisis of individuals and communities?

B. Being an Advocate for Justice: vs. 6-7

"Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits. Have nothing to do with a false charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty."

Living in an upright manner includes being an advocate for justice. So, while the impoverished are not to be given special privileges, neither are they to be denied justice (Exod. 23:6). The general point is that truth was to be sought in every case regardless of the social status of those involved. Accordingly, the righteous are to keep their distance from those falsely accusing someone of committing a crime. Likewise, the upright are banned from bringing capital punishment on those who are "innocent or honest" (vs. 7).

LESSON COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

An example of denying justice to the poor is the episode involving Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21). We know relatively little about Naboth except that he is from Jezreel in the northern kingdom of Israel. Ahab states that he wants Naboth's vineyard, yet the owner refuses to trade or sell the property. Then Ahab's wife, Jezebel, uses the king's authority to arrange for the elders and nobles who live in Jezreel to try, convict, and execute Naboth on the false charge of cursing God and the king. Jezebel's ruthless actions are consistent with the way pagan monarchs of the ancient Near East rule.

When the news of Naboth's death is reported to the queen, she in turn goes to her husband and tells him to take possession of the vineyard. Jezebel explains that Naboth is no longer alive. We do not know if Ahab asked what caused the death of the Jezreelite Naboth. King Ahab simply takes possession of the property. Ahab evidently is thrilled to learn that Naboth is dead. And without Naboth to object, Ahab is fully prepared to disregard God's standards and seize the property that did not really belong to him. Ahab can see that Naboth has been the victim of some terrible crimes, but remains silent to his benefit.

The Lord will not overlook the injustice that has been committed, and the Lord will not let Ahab close his eyes to it. So God sends the prophet Elijah the Tishbite to condemn the king for his crime. The Lord tells Elijah that Ahab has gone to take possession of Naboth's vineyard and that the prophet will find the king there. Elijah is to confront the guilty monarch with the truth. Even though Ahab has not personally murdered Naboth, God holds the king responsible for this wicked injustice.

Ahab's sin is one of deliberate and willful ignorance, silence, and permitting someone to commit evil for his benefit without asking any questions or seeking to stop it. Through Elijah, God made it clear that Ahab will pay a heavy penalty for acting unjustly.

LESSON COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

Questions:

1. Where has the Christian church overlooked justice today in society and among our neighbors?
2. Can you give an example of where we can do better as individuals and as a Christian community as a whole?
3. Are there organizations you can support and ways for individual Christians and churches to advocate for justice today?

C. Refusing to Accept a Bribe: vs. 8

"Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the righteous."

A "bribe" (Exod. 23:8) is a gift of money or possessions to persuade someone to act illegally or dishonestly. This includes paying off judges, politicians, administrators, or demanding a fee just to hear a case or perform a legal right. Bribery was a common problem in the ancient Near East (not unlike today's lobbyist industry). In fact, it was so severe that some societies prescribed the death penalty for a person caught offering or taking a bribe. God's law does not stipulate a specific penalty for this crime, but does consider it an unlawful act. The Lord declares that bribes can cause judges (today we would add politicians and school systems) to act greedily or discriminatorily rather than justly. Bribes have the effect of diluting a just person's testimony and allowing the guilty to go free. **Truth: Accepting a bribe makes impartial justice an impossibility** (see Deut. 10:17; 16:19; 27:25; Ps. 26:10; Prov. 6:35; 15:27; 17:8; Isa. 1:23; 5:23; Mic. 3:11; 7:3).

LESSON COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

D. Refusing to Oppress Others: vs. 9

“Do not oppress an alien; you yourselves know how it feels to be aliens, because you were aliens in Egypt.”

The Hebrew verb for “oppress” (Exod. 23:9) literally means “to crush” and refers to actions that are abusive and overbearing. The object of such mistreatment are foreigners/aliens. The reason the Israelites were to treat aliens fairly and objectively is that they have a history as foreigners in Egypt for 430 years (see Exod. 22:21; Lev. 19:33-34). The Lord is calling for a sense of interracial justice among God's people. They know, perhaps better than any of the nations around them, that foreigners usually have no family nearby to protect them if they are attacked. God says foreigners deserve protection. Throughout Scripture, the Lord is portrayed as showing compassion for the world's marginalized people. In fact, widows, orphans, the poor, and foreigners are often objects of God's special concern.

Question:

Can you think of instances today or over recent American history where an ethnic group (considered foreigners) is/has been oppressed/crushed by the majority in a society?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some examples that come to mind of malicious gossip?
2. How can YOU resist the temptation to follow a crowd in doing what is evil?
3. Why is it wrong to show favoritism either to the rich or the poor?
4. What are ways you can think to help those under heavy burdens/oppression?
5. How might YOU and your church reach out to help the oppressed and foreigners in your communities when oppressed and in need of Christ?
6. Are there opportunities through church ministries or community organizations for YOU to be involved in social justice and practice social responsibility?

CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

The injustices referred to in Exodus 23:1-9 have a modern ring to them. It parallels that of the wealthy people and financial institutions in our recent financial and housing (foreclosure) crisis. These individuals and financial institutions unjustly gained billions of dollars while impoverishing hundreds of thousands of ordinary people.

We will, at times, experience the temptation to covet and to seek personal satisfaction. A focus on our own satisfaction unfailingly leads us into unjust actions. First, it crowds God out of our thinking. We cannot love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and not really be interested in what God wants from us. We will neither meditate on God's desires, apply God's commands to our personal conduct, nor give practical action to our faith. Second, a primary concern with our own pleasure prevents us from truly loving our neighbors. Instead of being compassionate to them and doing good to, with, and for them, we will use others to satisfy our own desires. Third, selfishness leads us to dismiss the power we have by remaining on the sidelines and silent when we should be lifting our voice in protest with the oppressed.

Promoting justice involves dealing and standing rightly with others. Injustice grows from carelessness about others and not being interested in whether they are treated justly. When YOU care too much for yourself, you don't really care too much about anyone else. That is not living justly or socially responsible!

LESSON NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Rules for Just living: Social Responsibility
UNIT 1 ♦ LESSON 1 JUSTICE DEFINED



Acting on a Widow's Behalf: Concern for the Helpless

DEVOTIONAL READING

LUKE 15:11-24

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday June 4
Luke 15: 11-24
A Son Restored

Tuesday June 5
Psalm 58:1-6
The Protector of Widows

Wednesday June 6
Luke 20:46-11:4
Greed and Generosity

Thursday June 7
2 Kings 4:8-17
A Promised Son

Friday June 8
2 Kings 4:19-27
Seeking Help from the Prophet

Saturday June 9
2 Kings 4:28-37
A Child Restored

Sunday June 10
2 Kings 8:1-6
Justice for a Widow
A David C. Cook Publication & Keith
Savage Lesson

Scripture

Background Scripture: 2 Kings 4:1-37; 8:1-6

Scripture Lesson: 2 Kings 8:1-6

Key Verse: *"The king ... assigned an official to her case and said to him, 'Give back everything that belonged to her, including all the income from her land from the day she left the country until now.'"* 2 Kings 8:6

Scripture Lesson for Teens: 2 Kings 8:1-6

Key Verse for Teens: *"The king ... said to [an official], 'Give back everything that belonged to her, including all the income from her land from the day she left the country until now.'"* 2 Kings 8:6.

Lesson Aim

God's plan for us may not match our expectations.

Lesson Setting

Time: 852–841 B.C.

Place: Israel and Philistia

Lesson Outline

Acting on a Widow's Behalf

- I. The Seven-Year Famine: 2 Kings 8:1-2
 - A. The Directive to Leave Israel: vs. 1
 - B. The Decision to Relocate to Philistia: vs. 2
- II. The Restoration of Property: 2 Kings 8:3-6
 - A. The Shunammite's Appeal: vs. 3-5
 - B. The King's Decision: vs. 6

INTRODUCTIONS

Introduction for Adults

Topic: Restorative Justice

Who cares for the poor without any preconditions? The ministry of Elisha in the life of the Shunammite woman indicates that God does. And Christians should, too, for it is one way the Lord brings about restorative justice.

During Jesus' earthly ministry, He stood against oppression of the poor and the helpless flocked to Him. Knowing that our Lord cares for the poor does not excuse YOU of your duty to give time, wisdom, money, and action to help. Rather, You who belong to Christ by faith are to be instruments and voices of goodness and grace to the disadvantaged, oppressed, and abused in society and community.

We admit there are small risks in being so generous. Some selfishly worry about channeling resources in the wrong direction. Others may be concerned about whether our benevolent—emergency assistance programs are well managed. However, such concerns should never prevent us from reaching out to people in need. If we wait until all conditions are perfect, we will never find the right time to do anything in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Introduction for Teenagers

Topic: Restoration through Justice

When the prophet Elisha ministered to the Shunammite woman and her family, the prophet did so unconditionally. Justice prevailed when Israel's king restored the Shunammite's house and land to her, all due to the sterling reputation Elisha had as God's spokesperson.

There are reasons why Christians must care for others, especially the poor, without expecting anything in return. A big obstacle in doing so is our consuming self-interest. The world tells us to put ourselves first, to look out for number one. God hates such pride. When we care for others, we strip ourselves of the desire to be first. We affirm the teaching of Jesus that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). That is a spiritual principle that born-again teenagers dare not ignore, especially if they wish to enjoy the joy of the Lord.

LESSON COMMENTARY

I. The Seven-Year Famine: 2 Kings 8:1-2

A. The Directive to Leave Israel; vs. 1

“Now Elisha had said to the woman whose son he had restored to life, ‘Go away with your family and stay for a while wherever you can, because the Lord has decreed a famine in the land that will last seven years.’”

Elisha (848–797 B.C.), whose name means “God is salvation,” is the son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah, a town located on the west side of the Jordan River. Elisha is also a prophet who succeeds Elijah (875–848 B.C.) in being God’s prophet (1 Kings 19:16-21). Before Elijah is taken up to heaven, he gives Elisha a double share of his prophetic spirit (2 Kings 2:9-15). God blesses Elisha’s ministry as Elijah’s replacement. Elisha’s 51-year ministry takes place in the northern kingdom of Israel. Elisha declares the divine message and advises kings and monarchs.

Second Kings 8:1 mentions an incident in which God uses Elisha to bring a mother’s son back to life. The woman is a wealthy resident of Shunem (4:8), a town located about three miles north of Jezreel. Sometime later, Elisha urges the woman to move her family temporarily to another place. The prophet explains that the Lord has decreed a seven-year famine on Israel for disobedience and to bring them to repentance (see Joel 2:12-14; Zeph. 3:5-7). The details of Elisha’s previous history with the Shunammite woman and her son are recorded in 2 Kings 4:8-37. We learn that as part of Elisha’s ministerial duties, he travels a circuit in which he visits groups of prophets who are under his spiritual care and direction. On one occasion, while Elisha is in Shunem, he meets the previously mentioned woman. In turn, she invites the prophet to her home for a meal (vs. 8). After that, whenever he is passing through the town, he will eat with the woman and her husband.

Soon Elisha is recognized as a “holy man of God” (vs. 9). Contemplating the holiness of God does not have to be a theological abstraction. Elisha’s holiness indicates his character and actions are morally pure. He is a source of Godly goodness and truth.

Question: Does Your service to God and aid to the poor and oppressed reflect a truth for the cause of God’s justice for the “least of these” among and around us?

PAGE 4 ACTING ON A WIDOW'S BEHALF: CONCERN FOR THE HELPLESS

LESSON COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

(continued)

Elisha, as a holy person, devotes himself in service to God. While all who belong to the community of faith are called to serve the Lord and their neighbors, prophets such as Elisha is consecrated to God's work in a special way. The Spirit of God is prompting the Shunammite woman to assist Elisha in his proclamation of the divine message. For the woman, this meant going out of her way to show hospitality. The woman recommends to her husband that they build a small, fully walled room on the flat roof of their house, which Elisha could easily access by means of an outside staircase. Whenever Elisha visits the couple in Shunem, he can stay in the room (2 Kings 4:10).

From all appearances, the husband agrees with his wife's suggestion, for verse 11 indicates that the upstairs private room became Elisha's place to stay whenever he passed through Shunem. This prompts Elisha to direct his personal servant, Gehazi, to tell the Shunammite woman the prophet wants to speak to her (vs. 12). The Hebrew of 4:13 literally says, "you have turned trembling to us with all this trembling." The idea behind this expression is that this woman has gone to a lot of trouble to provide for Elisha's needs. Elisha feels so moved by the woman's generosity that he asks what he can do for her. The woman's kindness, however, is not mercenary in character. Her hospitality reflects her genuine respect for the prophet as a spokesman for God. She lives securely and has all her needs met within the community of her family.

Elisha finds a way to express his appreciation in a tangible manner to the Shunammite woman. When the prophet asks what he can do for her, Gehazi notes that the woman is childless and with little prospect to bear a son now that her husband is old (vs. 14). In the culture of her day, being childless means no male heir to the family estate and the end of the family name after the death of the husband. If the woman becomes a widow, her own future will be at risk. The death of her husband could leave her in an abandoned and helpless state. Widowhood is viewed with reproach by many in Israelite society of the times.

LESSON COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

Thus, a widow without legal protection is often vulnerable to neglect or exploitation. Sadly, it is too common for greedy and immoral agents to defraud a destitute widow of whatever property she owns.

When Elisha learns that his generous host is childless, he finds a way to personally minister to her. The prophet directs Gehazi to summon the Shunammite woman. As she stands in the doorway to the upstairs room (vs. 15), she is unprepared for what happens next. Elisha promises that next year at this same time, the once barren wife will be holding her own newborn son in her arms. The Shunammite is taken aback by what she hears. While respectfully addressing the prophet as her "lord" (vs. 16), the woman asks this "man of God" not to mislead her. The response from the woman signals how deeply she longs to be a mother and how anguished she feels at not being able to conceive.

Verse 17 reveals that the Shunammite woman did conceive, and at the specified time the following year, she gave birth to a son. This takes place in fulfillment of what the prophet has foretold. We can imagine extended family and neighbors joining the couple as they celebrate the goodness of the Lord in giving this husband and wife a son. The child's birth confirms Elisha truly as a "holy man of God" (vs. 9).

B. The Decision to Relocate to Philistia: vs. 2

"The woman proceeded to do as the man of God said. She and her family went away and stayed in the land of the Philistines seven years."

Over the course of the Shunammite woman's previous encounters with Elisha, she has learned to trust his judgment and value his wise counsel. The Shunammite will need to do so again, especially in light of what the prophet reveals concerning the divine decree of a prolonged famine. The Shunammite decides to sojourn for the seven-year famine period in Philistia (2 Kings 8:2), the land of the Philistines. The land is located between Joppa and Gaza on the coastal plain of southwest Palestine (see Pss. 60:8; 108:9).

LESSON COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

II. The Restoration of Property: 2 Kings 8:3-6**A. The Shunammite's Appeal: vss. 3-5**

"At the end of the seven years she came back from the land of the Philistines and went to the king to beg for her house and land. The king was talking to Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, and had said, 'Tell me about all the great things Elisha has done.' Just as Gehazi was telling the king how Elisha had restored the dead to life, the woman whose son Elisha had brought back to life came to beg the king for her house and land. Gehazi said, 'This is the woman, my lord the king, and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life.'"

In the culture of that day, once a family leaves its home and land to resettle elsewhere, it is likely that another clan in the community will take control of the property. After sojourning in Philistia for seven years, she relocates her family back to Israel (possibly now a widow; see 2 Kings 4:14). She seeks an audience with Joram to ask him to give her back her house and field (8:3). At that moment, the king was talking with Gehazi (Elisha's servant). Joram wants Gehazi to give an account of all the wonderful deeds God's prophet has performed (vs. 4). Clearly, the monarch holds Elisha in great esteem.

According to verse 5, Gehazi is recounting the incident when Elisha brought the dead back to life. Just then, the Shunammite woman arrives with her (now teenage) son to ask Joram for her house and field. Elisha's servant states that the teenager was the person whom the prophet had brought back to life. Years ago, a severe headache preceded the boy's unexpected death (4:18-20). In turn, the mother had her son's body placed on the bed in the guest room used by Elisha (vs. 21). After the prophet learned of the boy's death, he traveled back with the Shunammite woman to her home (vss. 26-31). Once the prophet reached the house, he saw the boy's body on the guest bed (vs. 32). At this point, Elisha went into the room by himself and shut the door, so that he could earnestly pray to the Lord in private (vs. 33). The prophet placed himself on the lifeless boy, and as Elisha did so, the child's skin began to grow warm (vs. 34).

LESSON COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

He once again stretched himself upon the boy, and this time the boy sneezed seven times before finally opening his eyes (vs. 35). Elisha directed Gehazi to summon the Shunammite woman, and when she arrived, the prophet invited her to embrace her son (vs. 36). The mother, now filled with joy and gratitude, took the child in her arms and left (vs. 37). The Lord foresaw the problem and provided guidelines for discerning false from true prophets. If a prophet's message led people away from God and God's commandments (Deut. 13:1-3; Jer. 23:13-32; Mic. 3:5-7), then the message was false, and the messenger was a lying prophet. In the case of the Shunammite woman's son being restored to life by Elisha, this was a miracle that confirmed him as a genuine spokesperson for the Lord.

B. The King's Decision: vs. 6

"The king asked the woman about it, and she told him. Then he assigned an official to her case and said to him, 'Give back everything that belonged to her, including all the income from her land from the day she left the country until now.'"

Joram does not hesitate to confirm the truthfulness of the account Gehazi has told him. The king asks the Shunammite woman to recall the miracle of how Elisha restored her dead child to life. Joram is genuinely impressed by what he hears, so much so that he grants the woman's request. The king orders his attendants to restore to her everything that she owned, which would have been the house and surrounding fields. Moreover, the king directs that she is to receive the income from the crops her field produced during her seven-year absence in Philistia (2 Kings 8:6). It is an appeal of the woman of Shunem to the justice of the king.

Rather than a challenge to the justice of God, these stories of Elisha are an example of God's mercy in outrageous times. We need to set aside our preconceived notions of God's plan for our lives and be open to the unexpected. We also need to set aside any notions we have of the type of circumstances and people God will use to set us and others free. The former Chancellor of Wheaton college, once said, "Never doubt in the darkness what God has shown you in the light." Today, in the light of God's Word, we see that the Lord is concerned for us in our struggles and seeks to minister to us where we are.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What circumstances led to Elisha restoring the Shunammite woman's son?
2. Why do you think the Lord decreed a seven-year famine to overtake Israel?
3. If you were the Shunammite woman, would you have abandoned your home and field as she did?
4. How much courage do you think it took for this Shunammite woman to bring her petition before the king?
5. How do we demonstrate our faith in God when we reach out to others in need, especially when we are experiencing times of great want?

CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

We see that God works in mysterious ways. Most likely, the woman did not anticipate that a seven-year famine would overtake Israel. How could she know that Elisha would urge her to leave Israel to live elsewhere? Then there's the challenge she faced when she returned to Israel. She had to petition the king for justice - for her house and land.

From this week's lesson we come to understand that God works in your life, and challenges you to go beyond your expectations and comfort zones. God's plan may not match what you anticipate or desire to happen. You may have thought you would be living in a different place, making more money, or have less obstacles and challenges in following God. When our plans are not God's plan, we must make a choice: surrender to self-pity or accept the unexpected opportunities God makes available to us. For instance, will you follow Peter's example and reach out to people whom you have ignored but whom God wants you to accept when they suffer? Will you do things, in God, for others you never thought you could or should do (see Acts 10:9-35)? Although God's plan might lead you into uncomfortable places, you can always rely on God's wisdom and love. Like our **VOICE social justice organizing**, we realize persons have been stripped of their homes and/or equity in them. You must rely on the Lord to stand in solidarity with the victimized in word and deed. **Your call of faith is to step out in faith to help restore justice to the oppressed.**

LESSON NOTES

[illegible]



Acting on a Widow's Behalf: Concern for the Helpless
UNIT 2 ♦ LESSON 1 JUSTICE ENACTED



Cease to do evil,
learn to do good;
seek justice,
rescue the
oppressed.

Defend the
orphan,
plead for the
widow.

Isaiah 1:16-17

Unit 2 • Lesson 2 Justice Enacted

June 17, 2012

Making Judicial Reforms: Believing the Prophets

DEVOTIONAL READING

JAMES 2:1-5

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday June 11

Isaiah 33:13-22

The Lord Is Our Judge

Tuesday June 12

Psalm 72:1-7

May Righteousness Flourish

Wednesday June 13

Psalm 118:1-9

Steadfast in Keeping God's
Statutes

Thursday June 14

Job 28:20-28

Fear the Lord, Depart from Evil

Friday June 15

2 Chronicles 20:6-16

The Battle Is God's

Saturday June 16

2 Chronicles 17:1-8

Walk in God's Commandments

Sunday June 17

2 Chronicles 19:4-11

Judging on the Lord's Behalf

A David C. Cook Publication • Faith
Savvy Lesson

Scripture

Background Scripture: 2 Chronicles 18:28–19:11

Scripture Lesson: 2 Chronicles 19:4-11

Key Verse: [Jehoshaphat] told [the judges], "Consider carefully what you do, because you are not judging for man but for the Lord, who is with you whenever you give a verdict." 2 Chronicles 19:6.

Scripture Lesson for Teens: 2 Chronicles 19:4-11

Key Verse for Teens: "[Jehoshaphat] gave them these orders: 'You must serve faithfully and wholeheartedly in the fear of the Lord.'" 2 Chronicles 19:9.

Lesson Aim

To discern that renewing our relationship with God requires specific, sometimes costly steps.

Lesson Setting

Time: 872–848 B.C.

Place: Judah

Lesson Outline

Making Judicial Reforms

I. Appointing Judges: 2 Chronicles 19:4-7

A. Turning People Back to the Lord: vs. 4

B. Admonishing Leaders to Judge Carefully: vs. 5-7

II. Appointing Priests: 2 Chronicles 19:8-11

A. Choosing Priests to Administer the Law: vs. 8

B. Admonishing Priests to Serve Faithfully: vs. 9-10

C. Establishing the Religious & Civil Hierarchy: vs. 11

INTRODUCTIONS

Introduction for Adults

Topic: Return to Justice

The adage is true. *What we don't know can hurt us.* This is so in matters involving justice. It applies to our spiritual renewal. The 11th edition of Merriam-Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary* says that renewal involves restoring something to freshness or vigor. It is a process of taking what has become deteriorating and/or useless and making it new.

How can we experience spiritual renewal that is relevant to the words and practice of the prophets and Jesus the Christ? A consideration of the religious reforms enacted by king Jehoshaphat indicates that it requires specific, costly steps. This is particularly the case in terms of the energy spent, the time invested, and the personal sacrifices made for Godly justice and righteousness. Your actions will help foster spiritual renewal to make difficult choices and move forward in decisions.

Most Christians who have sought to renew their relationship with God will agree that the change, though in their best interests, is not always easy. They will probably concur that the benefits obtained are well worth the continual efforts.

Introduction for Teenagers

Topic: Fairness through Justice

God uses king Jehoshaphat to turn the hearts of the people back to the Lord. In turn, there is a renewed effort to promote fairness through justice in Judah.

A college student decides to quit school. He hops into his car and heads west. On the way he grows depressed and does not know where to turn. Then he remembers that his mother placed a Bible in the trunk of his car. He takes the Bible into his motel room and begins to read it. Soon God impresses upon his heart his need to repent and receive Jesus as his Lord and Savior. He decides to return home, finish college, and earn an honest living. He is now a Christian educator, a loving son, husband, father, and friend. He finds purpose by committing himself to Christ and God's justice and righteousness. If you read and heed God's Word, you have the assurance of Godly transformation to stand for justice.

LESSON COMMENTARY

I. Appointing Judges: 2 Chronicles 19:4-7**A. Turning People Back to the Lord: vs. 4**

"Jehoshaphat lives in Jerusalem, and he went out again among the people from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim and turned them back to the Lord, the God of their fathers."

The books of Chronicles cover the same time period as the books of Samuel and Kings, but it is not a collection of leftovers. The book of Kings shows Israel how to evaluate their kings by God's standards. Chronicles shows how vital the house of David and the temple are for the future of God's people. Second Chronicles limits its focus to the monarchs who reign from Jerusalem.

With respect to purpose, Chronicles provides encouragement for the Jewish exiles back from Babylon. They teach the importance of the worship of God. Chronicles champions the descendants of David as the rightful protectors of the priests, Levites, and temple. The genealogies/lists of officials helps Christians remember how connected we are to the those who came before and who worked hard to leave a godly legacy, even while suffering under injustice. The books highlight the efforts of righteous leaders to advance the kingdom of God within Judah. Finally, Chronicles is written to a community of faith that has survived captivity and oppression. These books are words of hope for people on the edge of despair experiencing injustice.

Jehoshaphat, whose name means "the Lord has judged," is one of Judah's godly kings. He reigns from 872-848BC. Jehoshaphat is 35 years old when he becomes king of Judah, and he reigns for 25 years in Jerusalem (1 Kings 22:42; 2 Chron. 20:31). Jehoshaphat follows in his father's footsteps by being careful to do what the Lord approves (1 Kings 22:43; 2 Chron. 20:32). He tries to eliminate from Judah the hilltop shrines people used to worship false gods (2 Chron. 17:6).

LESSON COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

Jehoshaphat desires to be as godly as his ancestor, David, and he experiences the Lord's favor (vs. 3). Indeed, Jehoshaphat is single-minded in his devotion to God (vs. 6). Judah's king refuses to seek guidance from Baal (the fertility and nature god of the Canaanites). Instead, Jehoshaphat turns to the Lord for help and obeys the Lord's decrees (vs. 4). The Lord made Judah secure, and Jehoshaphat receives great tribute and esteem from his subjects (vs. 5).

King Jehoshaphat understands the central role of the Mosaic law in Judah. For that reason, in the third year of Jehoshaphat's reign, he dispatches his civil and religious officials to teach God's Word in the cities of Judah (vss. 7-9). The Lord has made all the neighboring countries afraid to go to war with Judah (vs. 10). Former adversaries such as the Philistines bring Jehoshaphat tribute, while the people of Arabia bring him large flocks of rams and goats (vs. 11). These developments help Jehoshaphat to increase in power (vs. 12-19).

Jehoshaphat's reign is somewhat marred by his political and military alliance with wicked King Ahab of Israel (18:1-19ff). Yet, God affirms the commendable deeds Jehoshaphat has accomplished during his reign. This includes his efforts to follow the Lord's will and purge Judah of its Asherah poles (19:3). More generally, Jehoshaphat's tenure as Judah's king is characterized by religious reform in administering God's justice and righteousness. Even though his palace is in Jerusalem, he travels throughout the nation — from the southern-most city of Beersheba to the northern-most towns in the hill country of Ephraim. As the king traverses the nation, he encourages his subjects to heed the words of the prophets of God and to follow the Lord, the God of their ancestors (19:4).

Faith in God is always relevant because true and purposeful life (praxis) can only be found by believing God and God's prophets — taking God at God's word (Gen. 15:6; Hab. 2:4). The prophets ability to define justice and religion amid moral confusion, secular influence, and human waywardness was key to the Israelites back then and it is key to the Christian church today.

LESSON COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

B. Admonishing Leaders to Judge Carefully: vs. 5-7

"He appointed judges in the land, in each of the fortified cities of Judah. He told them, 'Consider carefully what you do, because you are not judging for man but for the Lord, who is with you whenever you give a verdict. Now let the fear of the Lord be upon you. Judge carefully, for with the Lord our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery.'"

As part of Jehoshaphat's religious reform efforts, he establishes a judicial system. This includes the selection and appointment of judges to serve throughout Judah, as well as in each of its fortified towns (2 Chron. 19:5). Mosaic law decrees these magistrates are to be fair and objective in the decisions they rendered. They are prohibited from perverting justice, showing favoritism, and taking bribes. Instead, they are to let the rule of law prevail and righteousness be their guide (Deut. 16:18-20). In every circumstance, the magistrates are to think carefully before pronouncing a judgment. The Lord promises to be with them in every case for which they render a just verdict (2 Chron. 19:6).

Throughout the process, they are to remember that God, who is the supreme Judge, will not tolerate any form of corruption (vs. 7). God uses Jehoshaphat's commitment to Scripture to strengthen the devotion of God's people to God's Word. The truths of God's Word will give the people encouragement and fortitude during the difficult time of restoration to the land.

II. Appointing Priests: 2 Chronicles 19:8-11

A. Choosing Priests to Administer the Law: vs. 8

"In Jerusalem also, Jehoshaphat appointed some of the Levites, priests and heads of Israelite families to administer the law of the Lord and to settle disputes. And they lived in Jerusalem."

When it comes to the operation of the judicial process, Jehoshaphat leaves nothing to chance. He instructs the priests, Levites, and prominent family leaders to fulfill their duties in reverence for the Lord. Their hearts are to be characterized by honesty, integrity, and pure motives (2 Chron. 19:9). They will be required to hear a variety of cases involving their fellow citizens who live in the outlying towns.

LESSON COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

Some issues will seem weighty, such as murder. Other issues will involve disputes involving the interpretation of the Mosaic law (which contain numerous directives, rules, and regulations). Regardless of the nature of the case, the religious and civil officials are to urge God's people not to violate God's decrees. If the magistrates fail to forewarn their fellow citizens, God will hold these officials and their colleagues responsible for the resulting moral failure of the nation. In turn, God's wrath would fall upon Judah's leadership. The way for them to avoid incurring any guilt is by conscientiously heeding Jehoshaphat's orders (vs. 10).

C. Establishing the Religious and Civil Hierarchy: vs. 11

"Amariah the chief priest will be over you in any matter concerning the Lord, and Zebadiah son of Ishmael, the leader of the tribe of Judah, will be over you in any matter concerning the king, and the Levites will serve as officials before you. Act with courage, and may the Lord be with those who do well."

Jehoshaphat goes further in delineating judicial responsibilities. In all disputes involving the Mosaic law, the leaders are to report to Amariah, the chief priest. Civil issues are to be brought to Zebadiah. No one person will shoulder all the work that arises within the judicial system. This is why Jehoshaphat decrees that the priests and Levites are available to keep order and ensure that justice is served. The Lord pledges to be with those who strive to do their best in making sure that righteousness prevails (2 Chron. 19:11). No one can tell who is sincere and who is hypocritical. Promises will be easy to make in the heart of the moment but hard to keep when the lure of idolatry calls. Yet, Jehoshaphat does all he can to bring God's laws into the conscious awareness of the magistrates.

This commitment to the Lord is found later in Jehoshaphat's reign when a coalition of Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites attack Judah from the direction of Edom (20:1-2). Understandably, the king is afraid. So he declares a fast and decides to seek the Lord's help (vs. 3). Jehoshaphat and many of the nation's religious and civil leaders assemble in the Jerusalem temple (vss. 4-5).

LESSON COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

The shrine is the place where God has pledged to show God's presence among the people. Verses 6-12 record the prayer that the king spoke. Judah's king asks God to help God's chosen people as they face a huge invading army.

Assembled with Jehoshaphat and the nations' leaders are their families (vs. 13). Just then, the Lord's Spirit comes upon a Levite named Jahaziel, who is present in the crowd (vs. 14). As a prophet of the Lord, he declares that Jehoshaphat and his subjects will not have to fight their adversaries, for the Lord will give the victory. The people of Judah march out against the enemy, for the nation knows God will be with them (vss. 15-17). The Battle is the Lord's.

In response to this prophecy, Jehoshaphat bows to the ground and worships the Lord. All those in attendance do the same (vs. 18). Then some members of the Levite clans stand and shout praises to God (vs. 19). Verses 20-30 recount how the Lord defeats Judah's foes. For the remainder of Jehoshaphat's reign, the Lord gives him great security on every side.

There is relevance in listening to the prophetic voice: "Have faith in his prophets and you will be successful" (2 Chron. 20:20c). To "have faith in his prophets" is to "have faith in the Lord your God" (20:20b). Faith in God is always relevant because true and purposeful life can only be found by believing God. But why are the Old Testament prophets relevant, and what makes their message spoken to ancient Israel more than 25 centuries ago applicable to our time?

- Their ability to define justice amid moral confusion and secular influence
- Their capacity to communicate both **passion and conviction** — to speak with divine authority by the power of God's Spirit as servants commissioned by God — unlike their rivals, who told "fortunes for money" (Mic. 3:8, 11; Amos 3:8)
- **Social Order:** Individual behavior matters — the prophetic voice holds people accountable for their deeds (or lack of) and espouses an agenda for social justice (Amos 4:1; 5:6-24)
- **Preaching:** The authority of prophetic preaching is in the faithful proclamation of the word of the Lord; the essential message of prophetic preaching is repentance (Joel 2:12-13); the medium of prophetic preaching is word, image, and practice.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What motivates Jehoshaphat to turn the hearts of the people back to God?
2. Why does Jehoshaphat appoint judges throughout Judah?
3. Why are the judges to serve the Lord faithfully and wholeheartedly?
4. Why are we reluctant to renew our relationship with God and neighbor?
5. What are some ways we can express our zeal and love for the Lord?

CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

When we first become Christians, our relationship with God feels strong. We are eager to do whatever God asks of us, and we desire to conform our lives to God's will. Over time, however, our devotion may weaken. We start worrying about our problems and become distracted by our own pressures of life. We care less about others or only about ourselves. The reforms that Jehoshaphat undertook suggest that renewing our relationship with the Lord requires specific, and sometimes costly steps. It is good for us to be aware of this truth. Otherwise, we might become discouraged or demoralized at our lack of commitment.

As you seek to renew your relationship with the Lord, you must examine your inner spiritual life. Do you think thoughts that are pure and wholesome, or do you tend to dwell on matters that are immoral or offensive? How eager are you to pray to God, study the Scriptures, and give God praise? If you are honest with yourself, you will discover at least one area of your life that needs changing.

You should also examine the external aspects of your spiritual life—your faith in practice. You must fellowship with God in order to stand with others when injustices are all around. You must go out of your way to encourage other believers who are struggling in the faith. Self-evaluation will be painful at times. Yet, the Lord will bring to mind areas of your life God wants to change. It might be the way you think, the words you use, or the actions/activities you do or refuse to do.

The prophets of God are called at times to a ministry with respect to the religious and political offices and institutions of society; they are also the "conscience" of both priest and king as they decry the exercise of social power without social responsibility to care for the poor, widow, orphan, stranger, etc.

LESSON NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.



Making Judicial Reforms: Believing the Prophets
UNIT 2 ♦ LESSON 2 JUSTICE ENACTED



Praise for God's Justice: A Song of Trust

DEVOTIONAL READING

LUKE 4:18-21

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday June 18
Malachi 2:10-17
Where is the God of Justice?

Tuesday June 19
Daniel 4:34-37
God's Ways Are Justice

Wednesday June 20
Isaiah 65:1-66
The Fast That God Chooses

Thursday June 21
Isaiah 65:8-9
God's Continual Guidance

Friday June 22
Luke 18:1-8
God Will Grant Justice

Saturday June 23
Amos 5:8-18
Love God and Establish
Justice

Sunday June 24
Psalm 146
Happy Are Those Who Execute
Justice
A David G. Cook® Publication & Media
Savidge Lesson

Scripture

Background Scripture: Psalm 146:1-10; Exodus 21-23; Isaiah 58

Scripture Lesson: Psalm 146:1-10

Key Verse: *Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob...He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry.* Psalm 146:5,7.

Scripture Lesson for Teens: Psalm 146:1-10

Key Verse for Teens: *Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob...He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry.* Psalm 146:5,7.

Lesson Aim

To remember that God is worthy of praise because of God's greatness, goodness, justice, righteousness, and glory.

Lesson Setting

Time: 538—4008.C.

Place: Jerusalem

Lesson Outline

Praise for God's Justice

I. Refusing to Trust in People: Psalm 146:1-4

- A. A Declaration of Praise: vs. 1
- B. A Call for a Life of Praise: vs. 2
- C. A Warning against Misplaced Trust: vss. 3-4

II. Depending Exclusively on God: Psalm 146:5-10

- A. God, the Source of Help and Hope: vs. 5
- B. God, the Creator: vs. 6
- C. God, the Faithful One: vss. 7-9
- D. God, the Eternal King: vs. 10

INTRODUCTIONS

Introduction for Adults

Topic: Executing Justice

There is no justice is the response of people who are cheated by the "system." No doubt such complaints are reasonable and often warranted, caused by what we call a miscarriage of justice.

When considering the issue of justice, your own integrity is important. You should avoid all appearances of unseemly behavior, even when others have wronged you. You should also avoid wallowing in bitterness, for an angry, resentful heart brings no pleasure to God, and it can destroy your spiritual vitality. The Lord is honored and pleased when you act on the issues of justice in the Spirit of the Lord.

Introduction for Teenagers

Topic: Justice through Human Experience

The teenager complained to his father about the family rules. The father explained that he was trying as best he could to establish Christian values within the home. His desire was not to make his son miserable, but rather to please God. The father explained, "I am answerable to God for how I run my family. One day I will stand before the Lord, and the Lord will evaluate how I exercised my responsibility as your father."

That was a new thought for the teenager. He knew he lived under his father's authority, but he had not considered that his father was accountable to an even higher authority. God is the Judge, not just for teenagers, but also of their parents and everyone else (for example pastors and teachers).

These observations remind us that God wants us to help one another do the best we can to carry out God's will for our lives. After all, God is our source of help and hope (see Psalm 146:5). Our "Maker" (vs. 6) is pleased when we strive to be just, righteous, and honest in all our relationships and actions, rather than taking advantage of one another, allowing others to do so, or tolerating oppression and favoritism of any kind (by way of silence and inaction).

LESSON COMMENTARY

I. Refusing To Trust In People: Psalm 146:1-4**A. A Declaration of Praise: vs. 1**

"Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul."

The Psalms are unique songs and prayers written over hundreds of years by many poets. The best-known author of psalms is David. In fact, more sacred songs are attributed to him than to any other author. Biblical historians record that David was "Israel's singer of songs" (2 Sam. 23:1) and that he organized the sanctuary's music program (1 Chron. 15:3-28). In addition to David, several people are claimed as authors by the psalm titles.

Neither the composer nor the occasion of Psalm 146 is known with any certainty. The psalm is a hymn of descriptive praise due to its emphasis on the person and character of God. The predominant theme is that people should put their hope and trust in the Lord. After all, people have no control of their individual destinies, and cannot guarantee the well-being of others. People and their institutions prove to be unreliable. Friends will fail you, governments will go wrong, politicians will disappoint you, and family will fall short. However Jesus reminds the disciples that "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Luke 21:33). In contrast, the psalmist declares God to be the all-powerful Creator and the Sovereign King of the universe (vss. 6, 10). Also, God is compassionate toward the marginalized of society (vss. 7-9). The covenant community is reminded that the Lord is utterly trustworthy in supplying all human needs, and God's love is always available to the disadvantaged.

Psalm 146 features the concept of "justice." It is justice which characterizes the purpose and will of the sovereign Lord. God exercises sovereignty on behalf of persons in need of freedom from oppression and social blessings (e.g. the oppressed, the hungry; the prisoners; the blind, the bowed down, the alien, the fatherless/orphan, and the widow). In fact, the psalmist says it is "the righteous" who oftentimes are assailed, assaulted, and oppressed (see Ps. 34:19). God helps the oppressed and opposes "the way of the wicked" (vs. 9; Pss 145:20; 147:6).

LESSON COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

For these reasons, the psalmist begins his hymn with the declaration, "praise the Lord" (vs. 1). The Hebrew for this phrase is *Hallelu Yah*, from which we get our English term *hallelujah*. The supporting thought behind the word — to give spirited and passionate praise to God — is based on the Hebrew verb *hālal*, which means "to be boastful" or "to praise." The Hebrew word *Yah*, which is a shortened form of *Yahweh* (the covenant name of the Lord God), is joined to the verb *hālal*. The combined phrase basically means "Praise the Lord!" In the New Testament, *hallelujah* occurs only four times, all in Revelation 19. This explains why many have called this Scripture passage the New Testament *Hallelujah Chorus*. The psalmist gives praise to God with his "soul." In the Old Testament, the soul or spirit symbolized the entire person as a living being. Scripture reveals that even after the death of one's physical body, the soul continues to exist (see Matt. 10:28; 22:37; Rev. 6:9; 20:4). It ends when the dead are resurrected at the end of the age (see 1 Cor. 15:35-55).

B. A Call for a Life of Praise: vs. 2

"I will praise the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live."

The Psalms arose from a long tradition of Hebrew poetry. Most books of the Old Testament, beginning with Genesis, contain at least some portions of poetry. Often, the poetry consists of two or three lines that are parallel in meaning (e.g. Psalm 146:2). In Psalm 146:2, the psalmist is reminded to live a life of praise to our God. Sing praises to God as long as you exist in physical form on the earth. The hymnist would make melody even in his dying breath to the Creator-King.

C. A Warning against Misplaced Trust: vss. 3-4

"Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing."

There is a tendency for people to place their confidence in persons or human powers which yield influence. The truth is that banks, politicians, and persons of wealth are mere mortals who have no special abilities to deliver anyone (Ps. 146:3). One day they, too, die, and it is then that their life's breath departs and the body returns to the earth. All projects, plans, and dreams depart with them at death (vs. 4).

LESSON COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

Ecclesiastes 3 offers similar thinking. Solomon, son of David, noted that despite the efforts of persons to exceed the limitations of earthly life, they remain as mortal as any other creature on the planet (see Eccl. 3:18). People breathe and are destined to die (at least once). Every creature is made from the same minerals and chemicals of the ground, and in death that is where all of them return (vs. 20; Gen. 3:19). In light of this truth, people of faith choose to praise and obey the Lord. There is an emerging awareness of the truth that there is life after death for people (Pss. 16:9-11; 49:15; 73:23-26; Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2). With the coming of the Christ, the truth of the resurrection has been fully and clearly revealed in the "Gospel" (see John 5:24-29; 2 Tim. 1:10).

II. Depending Exclusively On God: Psalm 146:5-10

A. God, the Source of Help and Hope: vs. 5

"Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God."

The contrast to the sorrow that results from trusting in mere mortals for salvation is the eternal joy of turning to the "God of Jacob" (Ps. 146:5) for help. Those who put their hope in the covenant-keeping Lord of Israel are truly "blessed." It is the Greek equivalent translated "blessed" Jesus is recorded using in the Beatitudes (see Matt. 5:3-12). Both the Hebrew and Greek terms connote the abiding presence of joy in those who are the recipients of God's favor. It is a sense of congratulating someone who has learned to trust God, whose sin was forgiven, or who knew how to care for the poor and stand with the oppressed. It is a way of celebrating a person who had learned to live God's life (full of God's justice and righteousness).

Thus the beatitude in vs. 5 is not unexpected. The psalmist makes clear joy and happiness are not the absence of pain and trouble, but the presence of a mighty God who cares about human hurt and acts on behalf of the afflicted and the oppressed.

LESSON COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

B. God, the Creator: vs. 6

"The Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them — the Lord, who remains faithful forever."

Genesis 1:1 reveals a truth of existence—everything in the universe owes its existence to God. This truth is reiterated in Psalm 146:6. Israel's God is the Creator of "heaven and earth," as well as the creator of the waters of the world and all the creatures who inhabit them. God is "faithful" to keep every promise made by God. This truth is a source of assurance for believers, who have made the Lord the foundation of their faith and the basis for their hope. Whether it is the heavens, the waters, the land, the vegetation, the sun, moon, stars, fish, birds, animals, people, or the food to sustain them, the Lord is the genesis or root of them all. In the same way, the covenant community in ancient times looked at the world with reverence because it reflected the glory of its Creator.

That said, the Lord's wisdom is especially evident in humans. People have abilities and aptitudes that far exceed those of other creatures. To illustrate this point, humankind has made abundant use (over abundance really) of the world's seas and oceans. This includes the fact that people and nations have built all kinds of vessels to travel over the seas and oceans. The earth is built on the Lord's foundations, and the Lord is the only One who can guarantee its existence. Yet, one day the present heavens and earth will pass away (see 2 Pet. 3:10). God will create new heavens and a new earth that will be eternal (Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1). The same power that upholds the world also provides a firm foundation for believers.

Such a great God is worthy of devotion, praise and dedication to serve the Lord and those whom the Lord loves and cares for (i.e. the poor, marginalized, vulnerable, and oppressed).

LESSON COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

C. God, the Faithful One; vs. 7-9

"He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked."

The Creator God is the one who defends (and calls each of us to do the same in the power of the Holy Spirit) the cause of the marginalized in society. God vindicates those who are crushed by the wicked, God feeds the hungry, and God releases the imprisoned (ps. 146:7). Likewise, Israel's God enables the blind to see. God lifts the burdens of those who are bent down from their heavy loads, and God is unfailing in love for the upright (vs. 8). Furthermore, the Creator of the universe protects the foreigner and sustains the orphan and the widow. The Lord overturns the plans of the wicked. God makes evildoers reap the harmful aftermath of their actions (v.9).

Psalms 82 makes the point that ultimately all authorities are accountable to the Lord. God measures the integrity of those to whom God has delegated power (e.g. governmental authorities, powerful businesses, churches, and individual Christians) according to their treatment of the poor, orphaned, afflicted, and the needy. Sadly, as vs. 2 makes clear, many were guilty of handing down unjust decisions. They showered special favors on the wicked, rather than punishing them for their crimes.

God accused the rulers of the nations with a variety of social injustices. For instance, they had failed to "defend the cause" (Ps. 82:3), or give fair judgment, to the disadvantaged in society (the destitute and the oppressed), as well as widows and orphans. God appointed earthly leaders to rescue the "weak and needy" (vs. 4) from the grasp of evil people and authorities. Tragically, the opposite happened. These verses summarize the teaching of the Mosaic law and indicate God's basic desire that the defenseless would find a haven of justice in the court and in the people of God. Instead, they are misjudged, ignored, and exploited. Today, it is clear the Church, in faith and practice, is guilty of the same—God help us!

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PRAISE FOR GOD'S JUSTICE

LESSON COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

D. God, the Eternal King: vs. 10

"The Lord reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the Lord."

Psalm 146:10 closes out the hymn with a declaration of the Lord's eternal reign. Here, "Zion" is figuratively used to refer to Jerusalem (today it is the Church). Throughout all generations, God remains the sovereign King over the eternal city and its inhabitants. For this reason, the chosen people are called to give God unending praise.

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PRAISE FOR GOD'S JUSTICE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it shortsighted for believers to put their trust in other humans alone?
2. What would feel like be like if the Creator God withdrew sustaining power?
3. What end awaits the unjust rulers, institutions, and people of the world?
4. What groups do you consider to be powerless today? How might You speak up in word and deed for them?
5. What are we saying to God when we neglect to praise God and lift our voices in care and defense for the marginalized and oppressed? How will you change?

CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

This week's lesson seeks to draw us to praise God for that which takes us beyond our human explanation. We come to see that God is worthy of praise because of God's greatness, goodness, and glory. We learn that God is both Lord and King, whose greatness is beyond discovery.

When we are astounded by the wonder of God's creation, we are more likely to praise the Lord than when we attempt to explain the world rationally. For example, to realize that a single solar flare from the Sun is more than 40 times the width of the earth should cause amazement. And even counting nonstop, it would take us thousands of years to number the stars in just one single galaxy. This in a universe with untold numbers of galaxies.

When we praise our great God, we honor the Lord for the way God graciously cares for us. Knowing this, we also have opportunities to express our gratitude to God by materializing the Lord's compassion in our love and care for the marginalized and oppressed. Recalling the Lord's compassion on our lives helps us to realize that we are God's mortal, dependent creatures who exist to serve and worship the Lord.

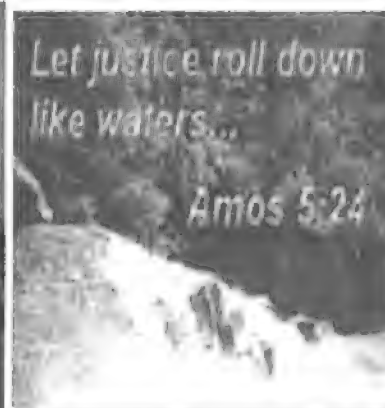
When you neglect to praise God, you take for granted your abundant provision of food, health, clothing, and shelter. You trivialize the value of God's sovereign care of the world. You communicate to God that you do not need God and that you can survive and prosper by yourself. **When that happens, you most likely will neglect to care for the marginalized and oppressed.**

LESSON NOTES

[illegible]



Praise for God's Justice: A Song of Trust
UNIT 3 ♦ LESSON 1 JUSTICE PROMISED



APPENDIX G

PRE AND POST SUMMARY SURVEY DATA

PRE-SURVEY-THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

SurveyMonkey

1. The church should only help as a last resort.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	0.0%	0
Somewhat Agree	25.0%	2
Undecided	25.0%	2
Somewhat Disagree	12.5%	1
Disagree	37.5%	3
answered question		8
skipped question		0



2. The church has a responsibility to help.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	25.0%	2
Somewhat Agree	50.0%	4
Undecided	12.5%	1
Somewhat Disagree	12.5%	1
Disagree	0.0%	0
answered question		8
skipped question		0

3. The church is not the State; we must stick to our biblical mandate to save souls and praise God.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree 	25.0%	2
Somewhat Agree 	12.5%	1
Undecided	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree 	37.5%	3
Disagree 	25.0%	2
answered question		8
skipped question		0



4. The church shouldn't take on many social issues.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	0.0%	0
Somewhat Agree 	12.5%	1
Undecided 	12.5%	1
Somewhat Disagree 	12.5%	1
Disagree 	62.5%	6
answered question		8
skipped question		0






5. Social justice demands we offer space and love.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree 	25.0%	2
Somewhat Agree 	50.0%	4
Undecided 	25.0%	2
Somewhat Disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	0.0%	0
answered question		8
skipped question		0






6. The church should help a little but not lead.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree 	25.0%	2
Somewhat Agree 	37.5%	3
Undecided	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree 	12.5%	1
Disagree 	25.0%	2
answered question		8
skipped question		0

7. The church should leave it up to individuals.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Agree		0.0%	0
Somewhat Agree		0.0%	0
Undecided		0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree		25.0%	2
Disagree		75.0%	6
answered question			8
skipped question			0

8. The church is not the State; that is not our responsibility.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Agree		0.0%	0
Somewhat Agree		12.5%	1
Undecided		0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree		25.0%	2
Disagree		62.5%	5
answered question			8
skipped question			0




9. The church should stay out of politics. The Bible doesn't address this matter for the church.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	0.0%	0
Somewhat Agree	12.5%	1
Undecided	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree	37.5%	3
Disagree	50.0%	4
answered question		8
skipped question		0




10. Social justice demands we participate and lead.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	25.0%	2
Somewhat Agree	62.5%	4
Undecided	12.5%	1
Somewhat Disagree	12.5%	1
Disagree	0.0%	0
answered question		8
skipped question		0






11. The church should only preach and teach stewardship (fiscal responsibility).

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree 	12.5%	1
Somewhat Agree 	12.5%	1
Undecided	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree 	75.0%	8
answered question		8
skipped question		0


12. Individuals are accountable for taking on too much debt and now must face their bad decisions.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree 	25.0%	2
Somewhat Agree 	62.5%	5
Undecided	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree 	12.5%	1
answered question		8
skipped question		0

13. The church is not a bank; but should help its own members who may need a little/limited help.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree 	12.5%	1
Somewhat Agree 	50.0%	4
Undecided 	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree 	25.0%	2
Disagree 	12.5%	1
answered question		8
skipped question		0

14. The banks will handle it fairly; scripture tells us to only preach and teach the Gospel.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree 	0.0%	0
Somewhat Agree 	12.5%	1
Undecided 	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree 	12.5%	1
Disagree 	75.0%	6
answered question		8
skipped question		0

15. Social justice demands the church advocate for just policies by the banks and politicians.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree 	50.0%	4
Somewhat Agree 	25.0%	2
Undecided 	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree 	0.0%	0
Disagree 	25.0%	2
answered question		8
skipped question		0

16. How long have you attended this church?

	Response Percent	Response Count
One year or less 	0.0%	0
1-2 years 	37.5%	3
3-5 years 	0.0%	0
6-10 years 	12.5%	1
11-15 years 	25.0%	2
16-20 years 	12.5%	1
more than 20 years 	12.5%	1
answered question		8
skipped question		0






17. Has your involvement in the congregation increased, decreased, or remained about the same in the last two (2) years?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Increased		75.0%	6
Decreased		0.0%	0
Remained the Same		25.0%	2
answered question			8
skipped question			0

18. On average, about how many times a month do you attend Christian Education classes (Sunday School and/or Bible Study)?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Once a week		62.5%	5
Twice a week		15.0%	1
Twice a month		12.5%	1
Once a month		0.0%	0
Other (please specify):			1
answered question			8
skipped question			0

19. How many church ministries are you involved in this church (including singing in the choir as one ministry)?

	Response Percent	Response Count
None 	12.5%	1
One 	6.3%	1
Two 	50.0%	4
Three 	37.5%	3
Four or more 	0.0%	0
answered question		8
skipped question		0

20. How many persons or families have you invited as guests or to join First Baptist Church in the past 12 months?

	Response Percent	Response Count
None 	0.0%	0
One 	25.0%	2
Two 	25.0%	2
Three 	25.0%	2
Four or more 	25.0%	2
answered question		8
skipped question		0

21. From the choices listed below, check the **SINGLE, MOST IMPORTANT** reason you have remained involved in your church (only one):

	Response Percent	Response Count
Spiritual growth at this church <input type="checkbox"/>	37.6%	8
Church social ministry/community outreach <input type="checkbox"/>	0.0%	0
Church reaches non-Christians with the gospel <input type="checkbox"/>	0.0%	0
Church is committed to promoting social justice <input type="checkbox"/>	0.0%	0
Church's evangelistic and/or missions program <input type="checkbox"/>	12.5%	1
Church denominational affiliation <input type="checkbox"/>	12.5%	1
Presence of the Holy Spirit in this church <input type="checkbox"/>	12.5%	1
Church is under the leadership of Jesus <input type="checkbox"/>	25.0%	2
Opportunities to do ministry <input type="checkbox"/>	0.0%	0
Church's theological or religious orientation <input type="checkbox"/>	0.0%	0
answered question		8
skipped question		0

22. Which age bracket are you in?

	Response Percent	Response Count
18-25 	12.5%	1
26-35 	0.0%	0
36-45 	25.0%	1
46-55 	37.5%	3
56-64 	12.5%	1
65 or above 	12.5%	1
answered question		8
skipped question		0

23. Are you:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Female 	75.0%	6
Male 	25.0%	2
answered question		8
skipped question		0

24. Are you:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Unmarried (divorced, separated)	0.0%	0
Single (never married)	12.5%	1
Married	75.0%	6
Widowed	12.5%	1
answered question		8
skipped question		0

25. Employment Status

	Response Percent	Response Count
Full-time	60.0%	4
Part-time	25.0%	2
Unemployed	0.0%	0
Student	12.5%	1
Retired	12.5%	1
answered question		8
skipped question		0

26. How many children live in your household?

	Response Percent	Response Count
None	25.0%	1
One	0.0%	0
Two	75.0%	3
Three	0.0%	0
Four or more	0.0%	0
	answered question	3
	skipped question	0

27. What is your highest level of formal education?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than high school	0.0%	0
High school graduate/GED	0.0%	0
Some college, trade, or vocational school	25.0%	1
College degree	37.5%	2
Post graduate work or degree	37.5%	2
	answered question	3
	skipped question	0

28. What is closest to your annual household income?

	Response Percent	Response Count
under \$25,000	12.5%	1
under \$75,000	12.5%	1
under \$200,000	62.5%	4
over \$200,000	25.0%	2
answered question		8
skipped question		0

29. What is your ethnicity?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Black	100.0%	8
White	0.0%	0
Hispanic/Latino	0.0%	0
Asian	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	0.0%	0
answered question		8
skipped question		0

30. I usually attend:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Sunday School Only	0.0%	0
Worship Services Only	0.0%	0
Both Sunday School and Worship Services	100.0%	8
	answered question	8
	skipped question	0

POST-SURVEY-THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT





1. How often did you attend the following services at First Baptist Church during June and July 2012?

	Adult Sunday School Disc	Sunday Worship	Response Count
June 3	27.5% (7)	100.0% (8)	8
June 10	100.0% (7)	100.0% (7)	7
June 17	25.3% (5)	100.0% (8)	6
June 24	100.0% (7)	100.0% (7)	7
July 1	25.3% (5)	100.0% (8)	6
July 8	100.0% (7)	100.0% (7)	7
		answered question	8
		skipped question	0


2. The church should only help as a last resort.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	0.0%	0
Somewhat Agree	12.5%	1
Undecided	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree	50.0%	4
Disagree	37.5%	3
	answered question	8
	skipped question	0

3. The church has a responsibility to help.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree 	50.0%	4
Somewhat Agree 	37.5%	3
Undecided 	12.5%	1
Somewhat Disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	0.0%	0
answered question		8
skipped question		0

4. The church is not the State, we must stick to our biblical mandate to save souls and praise God.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree 	12.5%	1
Somewhat Agree 	12.5%	1
Undecided	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree 	25.0%	2
Disagree 	50.0%	4
answered question		8
skipped question		0

5. The church shouldn't take on many social issues.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	0.0%	0
Somewhat Agree	12.5%	1
Undecided	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree	17.5%	3
Disagree	50.0%	4
answered question		8
skipped question		0




6. Social justice demands we offer space and love.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	62.5%	6
Somewhat Agree	25.0%	2
Undecided	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree	12.5%	1
Disagree	0.0%	0
answered question		8
skipped question		0




7. The church should help a little but not lead.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree 	25.0%	2
Somewhat Agree 	37.5%	3
Undecided	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree 	25.0%	2
Disagree 	12.5%	1
answered question		8
skipped question		0




8. The church should leave it up to individuals.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	0.0%	0
Somewhat Agree 	12.5%	1
Undecided	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree 	50.0%	4
Disagree 	37.5%	3
answered question		8
skipped question		0




9. The church is not the State; that is not our responsibility.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	0.0%	0
Somewhat Agree 	12.5%	1
Undecided	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree 	12.5%	1
Disagree 	75.0%	6
answered question		8
skipped question		0

10. The church should stay out of politics. The Bible doesn't address this matter for the church.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	0.0%	0
Somewhat Agree 	12.5%	1
Undecided	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree 	25.0%	2
Disagree 	62.5%	5
answered question		8
skipped question		0

11. Social justice demands we participate and lead.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree 	37.5%	3
Somewhat Agree 	60.0%	4
Undecided	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree 	12.5%	1
Disagree	0.0%	0
answered question		8
skipped question		0

12. The church should only preach and teach stewardship (fiscal responsibility).

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	0.0%	0
Somewhat Agree	0.0%	0
Undecided	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree 	60.0%	4
Disagree 	60.0%	4
answered question		8
skipped question		0






13. Individuals are accountable for taking on too much debt and now must face their bad decisions.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	0.0%	0
Somewhat Agree	82.6%	6
Undecided	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	17.5%	3
answered question		8
skipped question		0





14. The church is not a bank, but should help its own members who may need a little/limited help.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Agree	50.0%	4
Somewhat Agree	25.0%	2
Undecided	0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree	0.0%	0
Disagree	25.0%	2
answered question		8
skipped question		0

15. The banks will handle it fairly; scripture tells us to only preach and teach the Gospel.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Agree		0.0%	0
Somewhat Agree		0.0%	0
Undecided		0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree		12.5%	1
Disagree		87.5%	7
answered question			8
skipped question			0

16. Social justice demands the church advocate for just policies by the banks and politicians.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Agree		75.0%	6
Somewhat Agree		12.5%	1
Undecided		0.0%	0
Somewhat Disagree		0.0%	0
Disagree		12.5%	1
answered question			8
skipped question			0


17. How long have you attended this church?

	Response Percent	Response Count
One year or less	0.0%	0
1-2 years	25.0%	2
3-5 years	12.5%	1
6-10 years	25.0%	2
11-15 years	12.5%	1
16-20 years	12.5%	1
more than 20 years	12.5%	1
answered question		8
skipped question		0



18. Has your involvement in the congregation increased, decreased, or remained about the same in the last two (2) years?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Increased	87.5%	7
Decreased	12.5%	1
Remained the Same	0.0%	0
answered question		8
skipped question		0

19. On average, about how many times a month do you attend Christian Education classes (Sunday School and/or Bible Study)?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Once a week 	82.6%	6
Twice a week 	12.5%	1
Twice a month 	12.5%	1
Once a month 	12.5%	1
Other (please specify):		0
answered question		8
skipped question		0

20. How many church ministries are you involved in this church (including singing in the choir as one ministry)?

	Response Percent	Response Count
None	0.0%	0
One	0.0%	0
Two 	37.5%	3
Three 	82.6%	6
Four or more	0.0%	0
answered question		8
skipped question		0







21. How many persons or families have you invited as guests or to join First Baptist Church in the past 12 months?

	Response Percent	Response Count
None <input type="text"/>	12.5%	1
One <input type="text"/>	12.5%	1
Two <input type="text"/>	15.0%	2
Three <input type="text"/>	15.0%	2
Four or more <input type="text"/>	15.0%	2
answered question		8
skipped question		0

22. From the choices listed below, check the SINGLE, MOST IMPORTANT reason you have remained involved in your church (only one):

	Response Percent	Response Count
Spiritual growth at this church <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	60.0%	4
Church social ministry/community outreach <input type="checkbox"/>	0.0%	0
Church reaches non-Christians with the gospel <input type="checkbox"/>	0.0%	0
Church is committed to promoting social justice <input type="checkbox"/>	0.0%	0
Church's evangelistic and/or missions program <input type="checkbox"/>	0.0%	0
Church denominational affiliation <input type="checkbox"/>	0.0%	0
Presence of the Holy Spirit in this church <input type="checkbox"/>	12.5%	1
Church is under the leadership of Jesus <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	25.0%	2
Opportunities to do ministry <input type="checkbox"/>	0.0%	0
Church's theological or religious orientation <input type="checkbox"/>	12.5%	1
answered question		8
skipped question		0

23. Which age bracket are you in?

	Response Percent	Response Count
18-24 	12.5%	1
25-34 	0.0%	0
35-44 	12.5%	1
45-54 	50.0%	4
55-64 	12.5%	1
65 or above 	12.5%	1
answered question		8
skipped question		0

24. Are you:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Female 	75.0%	6
Male 	25.0%	2
answered question		8
skipped question		0

25. Are you:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Unmarried (divorced, separated)	0.0%	0
Single (never married)	12.5%	1
Married	75.0%	6
Widowed	12.5%	1
answered question		8
skipped question		0

26. Employment Status

	Response Percent	Response Count
Full-time	25.0%	2
Part-time	37.5%	3
Unemployed	0.0%	0
Student	12.5%	1
Retired	25.0%	2
answered question		8
skipped question		0

27. How many children live in your household?

	Response Percent	Response Count
None 	25.0%	3
One 	12.5%	1
Two 	62.5%	6
Three	0.0%	0
Four or more	0.0%	0
answered question		8
skipped question		0

28. What is your highest level of formal education?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than high school	0.0%	0
High school graduate/GED	0.0%	0
Some college, trade, or vocational school 	25.0%	2
College degree 	37.5%	3
Post graduate work or degree 	37.5%	3
answered question		8
skipped question		0

29. What is closest to your annual household income?

	Response Percent	Response Count
under \$25,000	0.0%	0
under \$75,000	15.0%	2
under \$200,000	80.0%	4
over \$200,000	15.0%	2
answered question		8
skipped question		0

30. What is your ethnicity?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Black	100.0%	8
White	0.0%	0
Hispanic/Latino	0.0%	0
Asian	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	0.0%	0
answered question		8
skipped question		0

31. I usually attend:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Sunday School Only	0.0%	0
Worship Services Only	0.0%	0
Both Sunday School and Worship Services	100.0%	8
answered question		8
skipped question		0

APPENDIX H
PRE AND POST SUMMARY QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY



1. Provide worship that deepens members' experience with God and the Christian tradition.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Give More Emphasis	41.2%	7
Generally Satisfied	58.8%	10
Too Much Emphasis	0.0%	0
Stay Out of It	0.0%	0
answered question		17
skipped question		0

2. Share the good news of the Gospel with the unchurched and unsaved.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Give More Emphasis	52.9%	9
Generally Satisfied	47.1%	8
Too Much Emphasis	0.0%	0
Stay Out of It	0.0%	0
answered question		17
skipped question		0

3. Engage in acts of charity and service for persons in need in the community and worldwide.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Give More Emphasis	5.9%	1
Generally Satisfied	84.1%	18
Too Much Emphasis	0.0%	0
Stay Out of It	0.0%	0
answered question		17
skipped question		0

4. Sermons and teachings with biblical support for Christians involvement in matters of social justice.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Give More Emphasis	17.6%	3
Generally Satisfied	82.4%	14
Too Much Emphasis	0.0%	0
Stay Out of It	0.0%	0
answered question		17
skipped question		0

5. The church taking a more activist role on the political, social, and economic issues of the day.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Give More Emphasis	17.6%	3
Generally Satisfied	70.8%	12
Too Much Emphasis	0.0%	0
Stay Out of It	11.6%	2
answered question		17
skipped question		0

6. I last participated in a community outreach ministry program

	Response Percent	Response Count
within the last few months	60.0%	8
more than a year ago	37.5%	5
never	12.5%	2
answered question		15
skipped question		1

7. I last participated in a social justice program or action

	Response Percent	Response Count
within the last few months	60.0%	8
more than a year ago	25.0%	4
never	25.0%	4
answered question		16
skipped question		1

8. I last participated in a fellowship action

	Response Percent	Response Count
within the last few months	75.0%	12
more than a year ago	18.8%	3
never	6.3%	1
answered question		16
skipped question		1

9. I last participated in a missions event

	Response Percent	Response Count
within the last few months	68.8%	11
more than a year ago	18.8%	3
never	12.5%	2
answered question		16
skipped question		1

10. For each of the following statements concerning a church's involvement in outreach and social justice, please answer whether you believe the statement is important, somewhat important, or not important at all.

	important	Somewhat important	Not important at all	Rating Count
It shows compassion to persons in need	100.0% (18)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	18
It helps to make society more just	81.8% (15)	18.2% (3)	0.0% (0)	18
It is the prophetic work of the church	88.9% (16)	6.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	18
It is a part of Black Church history & tradition	76.0% (12)	25.0% (4)	0.0% (0)	18
It is preached and taught in my church	88.9% (16)	6.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	18
It is being true to the Christian faith	100.0% (18)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	18
			answered question	18
			skipped question	1

11. From the choices listed below, check the **SINGLE, MOST IMPORTANT** reason you have **NOT** spent time involved in your church's outreach and/or social justice opportunities (only one).

	Response Percent	Response Count
I'm too busy with work, family, and activities outside of church.	25.0%	4
These are not the priorities of the church.	0.0%	0
I was involved in the past and have turned out.	6.3%	1
They are too political and controversial.	0.0%	0
I live too far away.	6.3%	1
These ministries don't seem important.	0.0%	0
The ministry actions/events are not well organized.	0.0%	0
No one has asked me to get involved.	6.3%	1
I don't see how it is connected to my faith walk.	0.0%	0
None of the above; I am actively involved.	68.8%	8
answered question		18
skipped question		1

12. Below is a list of words or phrases that might be used to describe your church. For each word or phrase, please indicate the degree to which the word or phrase describes your church.

	Describes our church	Somewhat describes our church	Doesn't describe us	Rating Count
Traditional	81.6% (8)	18.5% (5)	0.0% (0)	13
Contemporary	23.1% (2)	69.2% (9)	7.7% (1)	13
Agent for Social Change	69.8% (7)	45.2% (5)	0.0% (0)	13
Evangelistic	81.6% (8)	18.5% (5)	0.0% (0)	13
Missions Minded	78.8% (10)	23.1% (3)	0.0% (0)	13
Compassionate/Caring	88.7% (13)	13.3% (2)	0.0% (0)	15
answered question				18
skipped question				1

13. Please identify the priority you believe your congregation places on each of the following.

	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	Rating Count
Outreach to people not members of the church	75.0% (12)	15.0% (4)	0.0% (0)	16
Social Justice in the local community	87.5% (14)	12.5% (2)	0.0% (0)	16
Spreading the Gospel in word and deed	88.3% (14)	6.7% (1)	0.0% (0)	16
Welcoming age, ethnic, & income diversity in the membership	75.0% (12)	25.0% (4)	0.0% (0)	16
Giving emergency assistance to persons in crisis	81.3% (13)	18.8% (3)	0.0% (0)	16
Networking with nonprofits, civic groups, and other churches	78.6% (11)	21.4% (3)	0.0% (0)	14
answered question				16
skipped question				1



14. For each statement below, please mark what best describes your belief concerning the statement.

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Undecided	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Rating Count
A role of the church is to help save souls.	100.0% (18)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	18
The church has a responsibility to the needy.	81.8% (15)	12.5% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	18
Christian faith must focus only on faith.	25.0% (5)	37.5% (8)	0.0% (0)	12.5% (3)	25.0% (4)	18
Christian faith must promote God's justice.	87.5% (14)	6.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	6.3% (1)	16
Social justice is important to church teachings.	81.8% (15)	6.3% (1)	6.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	6.3% (1)	18
answered question						18
skipped question						1




15. How long have you attended this church?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than one year	0.0%	0
1-2 years	6.3%	1
3-5 years	43.8%	7
6-10 years	17.5%	3
11-15 years	0.0%	0
16-20 years	0.0%	0
21 or more years	12.5%	2
answered question		18
skipped question		1

16. Has your involvement in the congregation increased, decreased, or remained about the same in the last two (2) years?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Increased 	82.6%	10
Decreased 	6.3%	1
Remained the Same 	11.3%	5
answered question		16
skipped question		1

17. On average, how many times a month do you attend Christian Education classes (Sunday School and/or Bible Study)?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Once a week 	75.0%	12
Twice a week 	12.5%	2
Once a month	0.0%	0
Twice a month	0.0%	0
Other (please specify) 	12.5%	2
answered question		16
skipped question		1





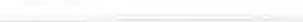





18. How many church ministries are you involved in this church (including singing in the choir as one ministry)?

	Response Percent	Response Count
None	25.0%	4
One	12.5%	2
Two	31.3%	5
Three	25.0%	4
Four or more	6.3%	1
answered question		16
skipped question		1

19. How many persons or families have you invited as guests or to join First Baptist Church in the past 12 months?

	Response Percent	Response Count
None	6.3%	1
One	6.3%	1
Two	31.3%	5
Three	12.5%	2
Four or more	43.8%	7
answered question		16
skipped question		1

20. From the choices listed below, check the SINGLE, MOST IMPORTANT reason you have remained involved in your church (only one).

	Response Percent	Response Count
Spiritual growth at this church 	75.0%	12
Church social ministry/community outreach 	0.0%	0
Church reaches non-Christians with the gospel 	0.0%	0
Church is committed to promoting social justice 	0.0%	0
Church's evangelistic and/or missions program 	0.0%	0
Church denominational affiliation 	0.0%	0
Presence of the Holy Spirit in this church 	6.3%	1
Church is under the leadership of Jesus 	18.8%	3
Opportunities to do ministry 	0.0%	0
Church's theological or religious orientation 	0.0%	0
answered question		16
skipped question		1

21. Which age bracket are you in?

	Response Percent	Response Count
18-24	0.0%	0
25-34	0.0%	0
35-44	0.0%	0
45-54	33.3%	5
55-64	43.8%	6
65 or above	23.7%	4
answered question		15
skipped question		2

22. Are you:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Female	46.7%	7
Male	53.3%	8
answered question		15
skipped question		2

23. Are you:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Unmarried (divorced, separated)	6.7%	1
Single (never married)	6.7%	1
Married	73.3%	11
Widowed	13.3%	2
	answered question	16
	skipped question	2

24. Employment Status

	Response Percent	Response Count
Full-time	60.0%	8
Part-time	20.0%	3
Unemployed	0.0%	0
Student	0.0%	0
Retired	20.0%	3
	answered question	16
	skipped question	2

25. How many children live in your household?

	Response Percent	Response Count
None	13.3%	3
One	73.3%	11
Two	6.7%	1
Three	0.0%	0
Four or more	0.0%	0
answered question		16
skipped question		2

26. What is your highest level of formal education?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than high school	13.3%	3
High school graduate/GED	33.3%	6
Some college, trade, or vocational school	20.0%	3
College degree	23.7%	4
Post graduate work or degree	0.0%	0
answered question		16
skipped question		2

27. What is closest to your annual household income?

	Response Percent	Response Count
under \$25,000	20.0%	3
under \$75,000	48.7%	7
under \$200,000	13.3%	2
over \$200,000	20.0%	3
answered question		15
skipped question		2

28. What is your ethnicity?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Black	86.7%	14
White	6.7%	1
Hispanic/Latino	0.0%	0
Asian	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	0.0%	0
answered question		15
skipped question		2

29. I usually attend:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Sunday School Only	6.0%	3
Worship Services Only	6.7%	4
Both Sunday School and Worship Services	83.3%	14
answered question		16
skipped question		2

POST-QUESTIONNAIRE: THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY



1. How often did you attend the following services at First Baptist Church during June and July 2012?

	Adult Sunday School Class	Sunday Worship	Response Count
June 3	88.9% (8)	88.9% (8)	9
June 10	87.5% (7)	100.0% (8)	8
June 17	100.0% (9)	100.0% (8)	9
June 24	88.9% (8)	100.0% (8)	9
July 1	86.7% (8)	86.7% (8)	7
July 8	75.0% (6)	87.5% (7)	8
		answered question	11
		skipped question	0

2. Provide worship that deepens members' experience with God and the Christian tradition.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Give More Emphasis	27.3%	3
Generally Satisfied	72.7%	8
Too Much Emphasis	0.0%	0
Stay Out of it	0.0%	0
	answered question	11
	skipped question	0

3. Share the good news of the Gospel with the unchurched and unsaved.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Give More Emphasis 	35.4%	4
Generally Satisfied 	64.6%	8
Too Much Emphasis	0.0%	0
Stay Out of it 	0.0%	0
answered question		11
skipped question		0

4. Engage in acts of charity and service for persons in need in the community and worldwide.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Give More Emphasis 	27.3%	3
Generally Satisfied 	72.7%	8
Too Much Emphasis	0.0%	0
Stay Out of it	0.0%	0
answered question		11
skipped question		0

5. Sermons and teachings with biblical support for Christians involvement in matters of social justice.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Give More Emphasis		18.2%	2
Generally Satisfied		72.7%	8
Too Much Emphasis		9.1%	1
Stay Out of it		0.0%	0
answered question			11
skipped question			0

6. The church taking a more activist role on the political, social, and economic issues of the day.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Give More Emphasis		27.3%	3
Generally Satisfied		63.6%	7
Too Much Emphasis		9.1%	1
Stay Out of it		0.0%	0
answered question			11
skipped question			0

7. I last participated in a community outreach ministry program

	Response Percent	Response Count
within the last few months	100.0%	11
more than a year ago	0.0%	0
never	0.0%	0
answered question		11
skipped question		0

8. I last participated in a social justice program or action

	Response Percent	Response Count
within the last few months	35.4%	4
more than a year ago	45.6%	6
never	18.2%	2
answered question		11
skipped question		0

9. I last participated in a fellowship action

	Response Percent	Response Count
within the last few months	81.8%	9
more than a year ago	9.1%	1
never	9.1%	1
answered question		11
skipped question		0

10. I last participated in a missions event

	Response Percent	Response Count
within the last few months	54.5%	8
more than a year ago	9.1%	1
never	35.4%	4
answered question		11
skipped question		0

11. For each of the following statements concerning a church's involvement in outreach and social justice, please answer whether you believe the statement is important, somewhat important, or not important at all.

	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important at all	Response Count
It shows compassion to persons in need	90.9% (10)	9.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	11
It helps to make society more just	81.8% (8)	9.1% (1)	9.1% (1)	11
It is the prophetic work of the church	81.8% (8)	9.1% (1)	9.1% (1)	11
It is a part of Black Church history & tradition	81.8% (8)	9.1% (1)	9.1% (1)	11
It is preached and taught in my church	90.9% (10)	0.0% (0)	9.1% (1)	11
It is being true to the Christian faith	90.9% (10)	0.0% (0)	9.1% (1)	11
answered question				11
skipped question				0

12. From the choices listed below, check the **SINGLE, MOST IMPORTANT** reason you have **NOT** spent time involved in your church's outreach and/or social justice opportunities (only one).

	Response Percent	Response Count
I'm too busy with work, family, and activities outside of church.	45.5%	5
These are not the priorities of the church.	0.0%	0
I was involved in the past and have burned out.	0.0%	0
They are too political and controversial.	0.0%	0
I live too far away.	9.1%	1
These ministries don't seem important.	0.0%	0
The ministry actions/events are not well organized.	0.0%	0
No one has asked me to get involved.	0.0%	0
I don't see how it is connected to my faith walk.	0.0%	0
None of the above; I am actively involved.	45.5%	5
answered question		11
skipped question		0

13. Below is a list of words or phrases that might be used to describe your church. For each word or phrase, please indicate the degree to which the word or phrase describes your church.

	Describes our church	Somewhat describes our church	Doesn't describe us	Response Count
Traditional	72.7% (8)	18.2% (2)	9.1% (1)	11
Contemporary	18.2% (2)	81.8% (7)	18.2% (2)	11
Agent for Social Change	81.8% (7)	36.4% (4)	0.0% (0)	11
Evangelistic	81.8% (8)	41.3% (4)	0.0% (0)	10
Missions Minded	100.0% (11)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	11
Compassionate/Caring	90.9% (10)	9.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	11
			answered question	11
			skipped question	0

14. Please identify the priority you believe your congregation places on each of the following.

	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	Response Count
Outreach to people not members of the church	46.6% (6)	36.4% (4)	16.2% (2)	11
Social Justice in the local community	64.6% (8)	45.5% (5)	0.0% (0)	11
Spreading the Gospel in word and deed	64.6% (8)	45.5% (5)	0.0% (0)	11
Welcoming age, ethnic, & income diversity in the membership	72.7% (8)	27.3% (3)	0.0% (0)	11
Giving emergency assistance to persons in crisis	81.8% (9)	5.1% (1)	9.1% (1)	11
Networking with nonprofits, civic groups, and other churches	72.7% (8)	18.2% (2)	9.1% (1)	11
			answered question	11
			skipped question	0

15. For each statement below, please mark what best describes your belief concerning the statement.

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Undecided	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Response Count
A role of the church is to help save souls.	80.8% (10)	9.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	11
The church has a responsibility to the needy.	80.8% (10)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	9.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	11
Christian faith must focus only on faith.	27.3% (3)	36.4% (4)	0.0% (0)	9.1% (1)	27.3% (3)	11
Christian faith must promote God's justice.	81.8% (9)	0.0% (0)	9.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	9.1% (1)	11
Social justice is important to church teachings.	81.8% (9)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	18.2% (2)	11
answered question						11
skipped question						0






16. How long have you attended this church?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than one year	0.0%	0
1-2 years	18.2%	2
3-5 years	27.3%	3
6-10 years	27.3%	3
11-15 years	0.0%	0
16-20 years	9.1%	1
21 or more years	18.2%	2
answered question		11
skipped question		0

17. Has your involvement in the congregation increased, decreased, or remained about the same in the last two (2) years?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Increased 	45.5%	5
Decreased 	0.0%	0
Remained the Same 	54.5%	6
answered question		11
skipped question		0


18. On average, how many times a month do you attend Christian Education classes (Sunday School and/or Bible Study)?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Once a week 	81.8%	9
Twice a week 	18.2%	2
Once a month 	0.0%	0
Twice a month 	0.0%	0
Other (please specify) 	0.0%	0
answered question		11
skipped question		0

19. How many church ministries are you involved in this church (including singing in the choir as one ministry)?

	Response Percent	Response Count
None 	5.1%	1
One 	27.3%	3
Two 	18.2%	2
Three 	27.3%	3
Four or more 	18.2%	2
answered question		11
skipped question		0

20. How many persons or families have you invited as guests or to join First Baptist Church in the past 12 months?

	Response Percent	Response Count
None 	18.2%	2
One 	0.0%	0
Two 	18.2%	2
Three 	18.2%	2
Four or more 	45.6%	5
answered question		11
skipped question		0

21. From the choices listed below, check the SINGLE, MOST IMPORTANT reason you have remained involved in your church (only one).

	Response Percent	Response Count
Spiritual growth at this church	64.6%	8
Church social ministry/community outreach	9.1%	1
Church reaches non-Christians with the gospel	0.0%	0
Church is committed to promoting social justice	0.0%	0
Church's evangelistic and/or missions program	0.0%	0
Church denominational affiliation	0.0%	0
Presence of the Holy Spirit in this church	9.1%	1
Church is under the leadership of Jesus	18.2%	2
Opportunities to do ministry	0.0%	0
Church's theological or religious orientation	9.1%	1
answered question		11
skipped question		8

22. Which age bracket are you in?

	Response Percent	Response Count
18-24 	5.1%	1
25-34 	0.0%	0
35-44 	5.1%	1
45-54 	38.6%	4
55-64 	38.6%	4
65 or above 	5.1%	1
answered question		11
skipped question		0

23. Are you:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Female 	54.5%	6
Male 	45.5%	5
answered question		11
skipped question		0





24. Are you:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Unmarried (divorced, separated) 	9.1%	1
Single (never married) 	9.1%	1
Married 	72.7%	8
Widowed 	9.1%	1
	answered question	11
	skipped question	0

25. Employment Status

	Response Percent	Response Count
Full-time 	63.6%	7
Part-time 	9.1%	1
Unemployed 	0.0%	0
Student 	9.1%	1
Retired 	18.2%	2
	answered question	11
	skipped question	0

26. How many children live in your household?

	Response Percent	Response Count
None 	17.3%	3
One 	54.5%	8
Two 	9.1%	1
Three 	9.1%	1
Four or more 	0.0%	0
answered question		11
skipped question		0

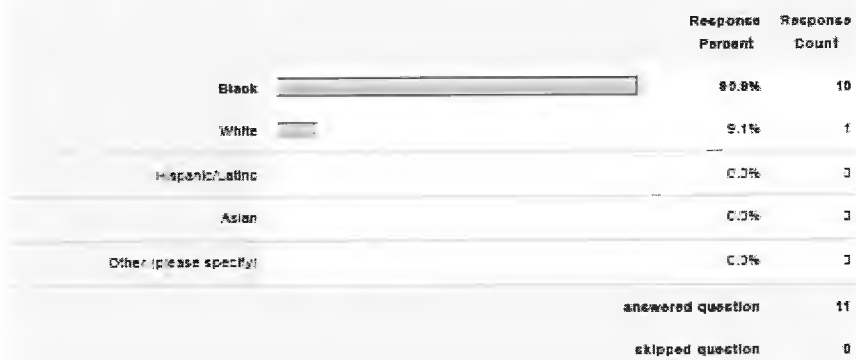
27. What is your highest level of formal education?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than high school 	0.0%	0
High school graduate/GED 	17.3%	3
Some college, trade, or vocational school 	36.4%	4
College degree 	17.3%	3
Post graduate work or degree 	9.1%	1
answered question		11
skipped question		0

28. What is closest to your annual household income?



29. What is your ethnicity?



30. I usually attend:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Sunday School Only	0.0%	0
Worship Services Only	0.0%	0
Both Sunday School and Worship Services	100.0%	11
answered question		11
skipped question		0

APPENDIX I

FREQUENCY TABLES FOR QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Frequencies

Statistics

Time frame			June 3 - Adult Sunday School Class	June 3 - Sunday Worship	June 10 - Adult Sunday School Class	June 10 - Sunday Worship
Pre- Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0
Post- Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0

Statistics

Time frame			June 17 - Adult Sunday School Class	June 17 - Sunday Worship	June 17 - Adult Sunday School Class	June 24 - Sunday Worship
Pre- Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0
Post- Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0

Statistics

Time frame			June 24 - Adult Sunday School Class	July 1 - Sunday Worship	July 1 - Adult Sunday School Class	July 1 - Sunday Worship
Pre- Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0
Post- Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	8	9
		Missing	0	0	1	0

Statistics

Time frame			Q2 Provide worship that deepens members experience with God	Q3 Share the good news of the Gospel	Q4 Engage in acts of charity and service for persons in need	Q5 Sermons and teachings with biblical support
Pre-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0
Post-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0

Statistics

Time frame			Q6 The church taking a more activist role	Q7 Last participated in community outreach ministry program	Q8 Last participated in social justice program or action	Q9 Last participated in a fellowship action
Pre-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0
Post-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0

Statistics

Time frame			Q10 Last participated in a missions event	Q11 Shows compassion to persons in need	Q11 Helps to make society more just	Q11 Is the prophetic work of the church
Pre-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0
Post-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0

Statistics

Time frame			Q11 Is a part of the Black Church history and tradition	Q11 Is preached and taught in my church	Q11 Is being true to the Christian faith	Q12 Reason not involved in Church outreach and/or social justice
Pre-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0
Post-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0

Statistics

Time frame			Traditional	Q13 Contemporary	Q13 Agent for social change	Q13 Evangelistic
Pre-Questionnaire	N	Valid	8	8	8	8
		Missing	1	1	1	1
Post-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0

Statistics

Time frame			Q13 Missions minded	Q13 Compassionate/ Caring	Outreach to nonmembers	Q14 Social justice
Pre-Questionnaire	N	Valid	8	9	9	9
		Missing	1	0	0	0
Post-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0

Statistics

Time frame			Q14 Spreading the Gospel	Q14 Welcoming diversity	Q14 Emergency assistance	Q14 Networking
Pre-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	8
		Missing	0	0	0	1
Post-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0

Statistics

Time frame			Q15 Help save souls	Q15 Responsibility to the needy	Q15 Focus only on faith	Q15 Promote Gods justice
Pre-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0
Post-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0

Statistics

Time frame			Q15 Social justice is important to church teachings	Q16 Time attended church	Q17 Involvement in the congregation	Q18 How often attend Christian Education classes
Pre-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0
Post-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0

Statistics

Time frame			Q19 Number of church ministries involved in	Q20 Persons or families invited as guest or to join	Q21 Why remained involved in church	Q22 Age bracket
Pre-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0
Post-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0

Statistics

Time frame			Q23 Gender	Q24 Marital status	Q25 Employment status	Q26 Children in household
Pre-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0
Post-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0

Statistics

Time frame			Q27 Level of formal education	Q28 Annual household income	Q29 Ethnicity	Q30 Services attend
Pre-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0
Post-Questionnaire	N	Valid	9	9	9	9
		Missing	0	0	0	0

Frequency Table

June 3 - Adult Sunday School Class

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	3	33.3	33.3
		Selected	6	66.7	66.7
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

June 3 - Adult Sunday School Class

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	33.3
		Selected	100.0
		Total	

June 3 - Sunday Worship

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	2	22.2	22.2
		Selected	7	77.8	77.8
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

June 3 - Sunday Worship

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	22.2
		Selected	100.0
		Total	

June 10 - Adult Sunday School Class

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	3	33.3	33.3
		Selected	6	66.7	66.7
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

June 10 - Adult Sunday School Class

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	33.3
		Selected	100.0
		Total	

June 10 - Sunday Worship

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	2	22.2	22.2
		Selected	7	77.8	77.8
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

June 10 - Sunday Worship

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	22.2
		Selected	100.0
		Total	

June 17 - Adult Sunday School Class

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	2	22.2	22.2
		Selected	7	77.8	77.8
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

June 17 - Adult Sunday School Class

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	22.2
		Selected	100.0
		Total	

June 17 - Sunday Worship

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	2	22.2	22.2
		Selected	7	77.8	77.8
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

June 17 - Sunday Worship

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	22.2
		Selected	100.0
		Total	

June 17 - Adult Sunday School Class

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	2	22.2	22.2
		Selected	7	77.8	77.8
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

June 17 - Adult Sunday School Class

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	22.2
		Selected	100.0
		Total	

June 24 - Sunday Worship

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	1	11.1	11.1
		Selected	8	88.9	88.9
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

June 24 - Sunday Worship

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	11.1
		Selected	100.0
		Total	

June 24 - Adult Sunday School Class

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	5	55.6	55.6
		Selected	4	44.4	44.4
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

June 24 - Adult Sunday School Class

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	55.6
		Selected	100.0
		Total	

July 1 - Sunday Worship

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	4	44.4	44.4
		Selected	5	55.6	55.6
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

July 1 - Sunday Worship

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	44.4
		Selected	100.0
		Total	

July 1 - Adult Sunday School Class

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	3	33.3	37.5
		Selected	5	55.6	62.5
		Total	8	88.9	100.0
	Missing	System	1	11.1	
	Total		9	100.0	

July 1 - Adult Sunday School Class

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	37.5
		Selected	100.0
		Total	
	Missing	System	
Total			

July 1 - Sunday Worship

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	3	33.3	33.3
		Selected	6	66.7	66.7
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

July 1 - Sunday Worship

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	NA (Pre-Questionnaire)	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Not selected	33.3
		Selected	100.0
		Total	

Q2 Provide worship that deepens members experience with God

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	3	33.3	33.3
		Generally satisfied	6	66.7	66.7
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	2	22.2	22.2
		Generally satisfied	7	77.8	77.8
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q2 Provide worship that deepens members experience with God

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	33.3
		Generally satisfied	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	22.2
		Generally satisfied	100.0
		Total	

Q3 Share the good news of the Gospel

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	6	66.7	66.7
		Generally satisfied	3	33.3	33.3
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	4	44.4	44.4
		Generally satisfied	5	55.6	55.6
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q3 Share the good news of the Gospel

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	66.7
		Generally satisfied	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	44.4
		Generally satisfied	100.0
		Total	

Q4 Engage in acts of charity and service for persons in need

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	1	11.1	11.1
		Generally satisfied	8	88.9	88.9
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	2	22.2	22.2
		Generally satisfied	7	77.8	77.8
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q4 Engage in acts of charity and service for persons in need

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	11.1
		Generally satisfied	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	22.2
		Generally satisfied	100.0
		Total	

Q5 Sermons and teachings with biblical support

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	2	22.2	22.2
		Generally satisfied	7	77.8	77.8
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	2	22.2	22.2
		Generally satisfied	7	77.8	77.8
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q5 Sermons and teachings with biblical support

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	22.2
		Generally satisfied	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	22.2
		Generally satisfied	100.0
		Total	

Q6 The church taking a more activist role

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	1	11.1	11.1
		Generally satisfied	6	66.7	66.7
		Stay out of it	2	22.2	22.2
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	2	22.2	22.2
		Generally satisfied	6	66.7	66.7
		Too much emphasis	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q6 The church taking a more activist role

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	11.1
		Generally satisfied	77.8
		Stay out of it	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Give more emphasis	22.2
		Generally satisfied	88.9
		Too much emphasis	100.0
		Total	

Q7 Last participated in community outreach ministry program

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Within the last few months	6	66.7	66.7
		More than a year ago	2	22.2	22.2
		Never	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Within the last few months	9	100.0	100.0

Q7 Last participated in community outreach ministry program

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Within the last few months	66.7
		More than a year ago	88.9
		Never	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Within the last few months	100.0

Q8 Last participated in social justice program or action

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Within the last few months	4	44.4	44.4
		More than a year ago	3	33.3	33.3
		Never	2	22.2	22.2
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Within the last few months	4	44.4	44.4
		More than a year ago	4	44.4	44.4
		Never	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q8 Last participated in social justice program or action

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Within the last few months	44.4
		More than a year ago	77.8
		Never	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Within the last few months	44.4
		More than a year ago	88.9
		Never	100.0
		Total	

Q9 Last participated in a fellowship action

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Within the last few months	8	88.9	88.9
		More than a year ago	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Within the last few months	8	88.9	88.9
		Never	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q9 Last participated in a fellowship action

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Within the last few months	88.9
		More than a year ago	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Within the last few months	88.9
		Never	100.0
		Total	

Q10 Last participated in a missions event

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Within the last few months	7	77.8	77.8
		More than a year ago	2	22.2	22.2
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Within the last few months	5	55.6	55.6
		More than a year ago	1	11.1	11.1
		Never	3	33.3	33.3
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q10 Last participated in a missions event

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Within the last few months	77.8
		More than a year ago	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Within the last few months	55.6
		More than a year ago	66.7
		Never	100.0
		Total	

Q11 Shows compassion to persons in need

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	9	100.0	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	9	100.0	100.0	100.0

Q11 Helps to make society more just

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	8	88.9	88.9
		Somewhat important	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	8	88.9	88.9
		Somewhat important	1	11.1	11.1

Q11 Helps to make society more just

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	8	88.9	88.9
		Somewhat important	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	8	88.9	88.9
		Somewhat important	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q11 Helps to make society more just

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	88.9
		Somewhat important	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	88.9
		Somewhat important	100.0
		Total	

Q11 Is the prophetic work of the church

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	8	88.9	88.9
		Somewhat important	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	7	77.8	77.8
		Somewhat important	2	22.2	22.2
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q11 Is the prophetic work of the church

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	88.9
		Somewhat important	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	77.8
		Somewhat important	100.0
		Total	

Q11 Is a part of the Black Church history and tradition

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	7	77.8	77.8
		Somewhat important	2	22.2	22.2
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	7	77.8	77.8
		Somewhat important	2	22.2	22.2
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q11 Is a part of the Black Church history and tradition

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	77.8
		Somewhat important	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	77.8
		Somewhat important	100.0
		Total	

Q11 Is preached and taught in my church

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	8	88.9	88.9
		Somewhat important	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	8	88.9	88.9
		Somewhat important	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q11 Is preached and taught in my church

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	88.9
		Somewhat important	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	88.9
		Somewhat important	100.0
		Total	

Q11 Is being true to the Christian faith

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	8	88.9	88.9
		Somewhat important	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q11 Is being true to the Christian faith

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Important	88.9
		Somewhat important	100.0
		Total	

Q12 Reason not involved in Church outreach and/or social justice

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Too busy with activities outside of church	3	33.3	33.3
		Live too far away	1	11.1	11.1
		None of the above; I am actively involved	5	55.6	55.6
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Too busy with activities outside of church	4	44.4	44.4
		Live too far away	1	11.1	11.1
		None of the above; I am actively involved	4	44.4	44.4
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q12 Reason not involved in Church outreach and/or social justice

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Too busy with activities outside of church	33.3
		Live too far away	44.4
		None of the above; I am actively involved	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Too busy with activities outside of church	44.4
		Live too far away	55.6
		None of the above; I am actively involved	100.0
		Total	

Traditional

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	5	55.6	62.5
		Somewhat describes our church	3	33.3	37.5
		Total	8	88.9	100.0
	Missing	System	1	11.1	
	Total		9	100.0	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	6	66.7	66.7
		Somewhat describes our church	2	22.2	22.2
		Does not describe us	1	11.1	11.1
	Total		9	100.0	100.0

Traditional

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	62.5
		Somewhat describes our church	100.0
		Total	
	Missing	System	
	Total		
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	66.7
		Somewhat describes our church	88.9
		Does not describe us	100.0
	Total		

Q13 Contemporary

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	1	11.1	12.5
		Somewhat describes our church	6	66.7	75.0
		Does not describe us	1	11.1	12.5
		Total	8	88.9	100.0
	Missing	System	1	11.1	
Total			9	100.0	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	2	22.2	22.2
		Somewhat describes our church	5	55.6	55.6
		Does not describe us	2	22.2	22.2
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q13 Contemporary

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	12.5
		Somewhat describes our church	87.5
		Does not describe us	100.0
		Total	
	Missing	System	
Total			
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	22.2
		Somewhat describes our church	77.8
		Does not describe us	100.0
		Total	

Q13 Agent for social change

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	4	44.4	50.0
		Somewhat describes our church	4	44.4	50.0
		Total	8	88.9	100.0
	Missing	System	1	11.1	
	Total		9	100.0	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	6	66.7	66.7
		Somewhat describes our church	3	33.3	33.3
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q13 Agent for social change

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	50.0
		Somewhat describes our church	100.0
		Total	
	Missing	System	
	Total		
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	66.7
		Somewhat describes our church	100.0
		Total	

Q13 Evangelistic

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	5	55.6	62.5
		Somewhat describes our church	3	33.3	37.5
		Total	8	88.9	100.0
	Missing	System	1	11.1	
	Total		9	100.0	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	6	66.7	66.7
		Somewhat describes our church	3	33.3	33.3
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q13 Evangelistic

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	62.5
		Somewhat describes our church	100.0
		Total	
	Missing	System	
	Total		
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	66.7
		Somewhat describes our church	100.0
		Total	

Q13 Missions minded

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	7	77.8	87.5
		Somewhat describes our church	1	11.1	12.5
		Total	8	88.9	100.0
	Missing	System	1	11.1	
	Total		9	100.0	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	9	100.0	100.0

Q13 Missions minded

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	87.5
		Somewhat describes our church	100.0
		Total	
	Missing	System	
	Total		
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	100.0

Q13 Compassionate/Caring

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	9	100.0	100.0

Q13 Compassionate/Caring

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Describes our church	100.0

Outreach to nonmembers

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	6	66.7	66.7
		Social justice in local community	3	33.3	33.3
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	5	55.6	55.6
		Social justice in local community	4	44.4	44.4
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Outreach to nonmembers

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	66.7
		Social justice in local community	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	55.6
		Social justice in local community	100.0
		Total	

Q14 Social justice

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	7	77.8	77.8
		Social justice in local community	2	22.2	22.2
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	5	55.6	55.6
		Social justice in local community	4	44.4	44.4
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q14 Social justice

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	77.8
		Social justice in local community	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	55.6
		Social justice in local community	100.0
		Total	

Q14 Spreading the Gospel

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	8	88.9	88.9
		Social justice in local community	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	6	66.7	66.7
		Social justice in local community	3	33.3	33.3
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q14 Spreading the Gospel

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	88.9
		Social justice in local community	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	66.7
		Social justice in local community	100.0
		Total	

Q14 Spreading the Gospel

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	88.9
		Social justice in local community	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	66.7
		Social justice in local community	100.0
		Total	

Q14 Welcoming diversity

Time frame			Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	77.8	77.8
		Social justice in local community	22.2	22.2
		Total	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	88.9	88.9
		Social justice in local community	11.1	11.1
		Total	100.0	100.0

Q14 Welcoming diversity

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	77.8
		Social justice in local community	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	88.9
		Social justice in local community	100.0
		Total	

Q14 Emergency assistance

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	8	88.9	88.9
		Social justice in local community	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	8	88.9	88.9
		Social justice in local community	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q14 Emergency assistance

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	88.9
		Social justice in local community	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	88.9
		Social justice in local community	100.0
		Total	

Q14 Networking

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	5	55.6	62.5
		Social justice in local community	3	33.3	37.5
		Total	8	88.9	100.0
	Missing	System	1	11.1	
	Total		9	100.0	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	7	77.8	77.8
		Social justice in local community	2	22.2	22.2
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q14 Networking

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	62.5
		Social justice in local community	100.0
		Total	
	Missing	System	
	Total		
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Outreach to nonmembers	77.8
		Social justice in local community	100.0
		Total	

Q15 Help save souls

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Agree	9	100.0	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Agree	9	100.0	100.0	100.0

Q15 Responsibility to the needy

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Agree	8	88.9	88.9	88.9
		Somewhat agree	1	11.1	11.1	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Agree	9	100.0	100.0	100.0

Q15 Focus only on faith

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Agree	2	22.2	22.2
		Somewhat agree	3	33.3	33.3
		Somewhat disagree	2	22.2	22.2
		Disagree	2	22.2	22.2
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Agree	1	11.1	11.1
		Somewhat agree	4	44.4	44.4
		Somewhat disagree	1	11.1	11.1
		Disagree	3	33.3	33.3
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q15 Focus only on faith

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Agree	22.2
		Somewhat agree	55.6
		Somewhat disagree	77.8
		Disagree	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Agree	11.1
		Somewhat agree	55.6
		Somewhat disagree	66.7
		Disagree	100.0
		Total	

Q15 Promote Gods justice

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pre- Questionnaire	Valid	Agree	7	77.8	77.8	77.8
		Somewhat agree	1	11.1	11.1	88.9
		Disagree	1	11.1	11.1	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	
Post- Questionnaire	Valid	Agree	8	88.9	88.9	88.9
		Disagree	1	11.1	11.1	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	

Q15 Social justice is important to church teachings

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pre- Questionnaire	Valid	Agree	7	77.8	77.8	77.8
		Somewhat agree	1	11.1	11.1	88.9
		Undecided	1	11.1	11.1	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	
Post- Questionnaire	Valid	Agree	7	77.8	77.8	77.8
		Disagree	2	22.2	22.2	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	

Q16 Time attended church

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pre-Valid Quest ionnai re		1-2 years	1	11.1	11.1	11.1
		3-5 years	3	33.3	33.3	44.4
		6-10 years	3	33.3	33.3	77.8
		20 or more years	2	22.2	22.2	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	
Post-Valid Quest ionnai re		1-2 years	1	11.1	11.1	11.1
		3-5 years	3	33.3	33.3	44.4
		6-10 years	3	33.3	33.3	77.8
		20 or more years	2	22.2	22.2	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	

Q17 Involvement in the congregation

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Increased	6	66.7	66.7
		Decreased	1	11.1	11.1
		Remained the same	2	22.2	22.2
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Increased	5	55.6	55.6
		Remained the same	4	44.4	44.4
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q17 Involvement in the congregation

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Increased	66.7
		Decreased	77.8
		Remained the same	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Increased	55.6
		Remained the same	100.0
		Total	

Q18 How often attend Christian Education classes

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Once a week	7	77.8	77.8
		Twice a week	1	11.1	11.1
		Other (please specify)	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Once a week	8	88.9	88.9
		Twice a week	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q18 How often attend Christian Education classes

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Once a week	77.8
		Twice a week	88.9
		Other (please specify)	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Once a week	88.9
		Twice a week	100.0
		Total	

Q19 Number of church ministries involved in

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	None	1	11.1	11.1	11.1
		One	1	11.1	11.1	22.2
		Two	2	22.2	22.2	44.4
		Three	4	44.4	44.4	88.9
		Four or more	1	11.1	11.1	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	None	1	11.1	11.1	11.1
		One	2	22.2	22.2	33.3
		Two	2	22.2	22.2	55.6
		Three	3	33.3	33.3	88.9
		Four or more	1	11.1	11.1	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	

Q20 Persons or families invited as guest or to join

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	None	1	11.1	11.1	11.1
		Three	2	22.2	22.2	33.3
		Four or more	6	66.7	66.7	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	None	2	22.2	22.2	22.2
		Two	1	11.1	11.1	33.3
		Three	1	11.1	11.1	44.4
		Four or more	5	55.6	55.6	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	

Q21 Why remained involved in church

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Spiritual growth	6	66.7	66.7
		Presence of the Holy Spirit	1	11.1	11.1
		Church is the leadership of Jesus	2	22.2	22.2
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Spiritual growth	5	55.6	55.6
		Church social	1	11.1	11.1
		ministry/community outreach			
		Church is the leadership of Jesus	2	22.2	22.2
		Church theological or religious orientation	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q21 Why remained involved in church

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Spiritual growth	66.7
		Presence of the Holy Spirit	77.8
		Church is the leadership of Jesus	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Spiritual growth	55.6
		Church social	66.7
		ministry/community outreach	
		Church is the leadership of Jesus	88.9
		Church theological or religious orientation	100.0
		Total	

Q22 Age bracket

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	46-55	3	33.3	33.3	33.3
		56-64	5	55.6	55.6	88.9
		65 or above	1	11.1	11.1	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	46-55	4	44.4	44.4	44.4
		56-64	4	44.4	44.4	88.9
		65 or above	1	11.1	11.1	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	

Q23 Gender

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Female	5	55.6	55.6	55.6
		Male	4	44.4	44.4	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Female	5	55.6	55.6	55.6
		Male	4	44.4	44.4	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	

Q24 Marital status

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Unmarried (divorced, separated)	1	11.1	11.1
		Married	7	77.8	77.8
		Widowed	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Unmarried (divorced, separated)	1	11.1	11.1
		Married	7	77.8	77.8
		Widowed	1	11.1	11.1
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q24 Marital status

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Unmarried (divorced, separated)	11.1
		Married	88.9
		Widowed	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Unmarried (divorced, separated)	11.1
		Married	88.9
		Widowed	100.0
		Total	

Q25 Employment status

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Full-time	5	55.6	55.6	55.6
		Part-time	2	22.2	22.2	77.8
		Retired	2	22.2	22.2	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Full-time	6	66.7	66.7	66.7
		Part-time	1	11.1	11.1	77.8
		Retired	2	22.2	22.2	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	

Q26 Children in household

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	None	2	22.2	22.2	22.2
		One	6	66.7	66.7	88.9
		Two	1	11.1	11.1	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	None	2	22.2	22.2	22.2
		One	6	66.7	66.7	88.9
		Two	1	11.1	11.1	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	

Q27 Level of formal education

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	High school graduate/GED	3	33.3	33.3
		Some college, trade, or vocational school	3	33.3	33.3
		College degree	3	33.3	33.3
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	High school graduate/GED	2	22.2	22.2
		Some college, trade, or vocational school	4	44.4	44.4
		College degree	3	33.3	33.3
		Total	9	100.0	100.0

Q27 Level of formal education

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	High school graduate/GED	33.3
		Some college, trade, or vocational school	66.7
		College degree	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	High school graduate/GED	22.2
		Some college, trade, or vocational school	66.7
		College degree	100.0
		Total	

Q28 Annual household income

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Less than \$25K	1	11.1	11.1	11.1
		Less than \$75K	3	33.3	33.3	44.4
		Less than \$200K	2	22.2	22.2	66.7
		More than \$200K	3	33.3	33.3	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Less than \$25K	1	11.1	11.1	11.1
		Less than \$75K	3	33.3	33.3	44.4
		Less than \$200K	3	33.3	33.3	77.8
		More than \$200K	2	22.2	22.2	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	

Q29 Ethnicity

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Black	8	88.9	88.9	88.9
		White	1	11.1	11.1	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Black	8	88.9	88.9	88.9
		White	1	11.1	11.1	100.0
		Total	9	100.0	100.0	

Q30 Services attend

Time frame			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Worship services only	1	11.1	11.1
		Both Sunday school and worship service	8	88.9	88.9
		Total	9	100.0	100.0
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Both Sunday school and worship service	9	100.0	100.0

Q30 Services attend

Time frame			Cumulative Percent
Pre-Questionnaire	Valid	Worship services only	11.1
		Both Sunday school and worship service	100.0
		Total	
Post-Questionnaire	Valid	Both Sunday school and worship service	100.0

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